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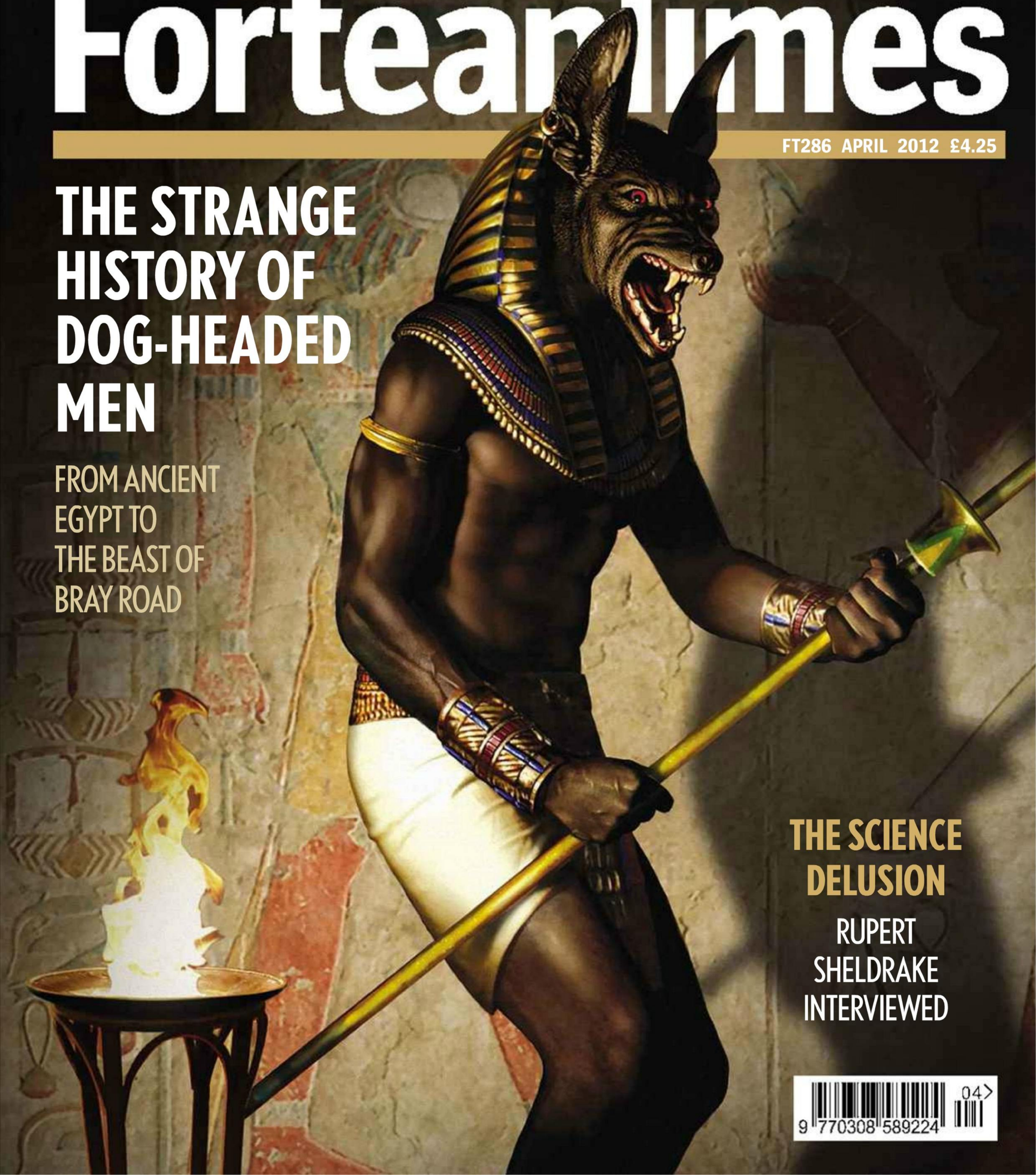

THE STRANGE HISTORY OF DOG-HEADED MEN

FROM ANCIENT EGYPT TO THE BEAST OF BRAY ROAD

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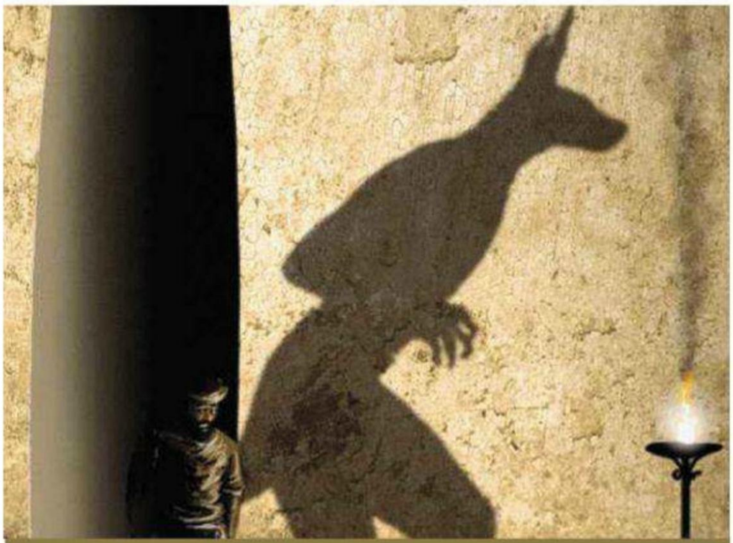
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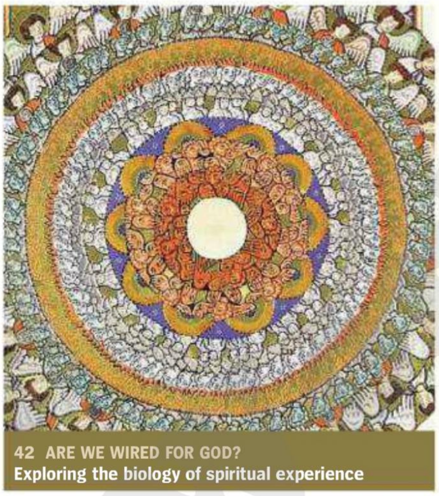
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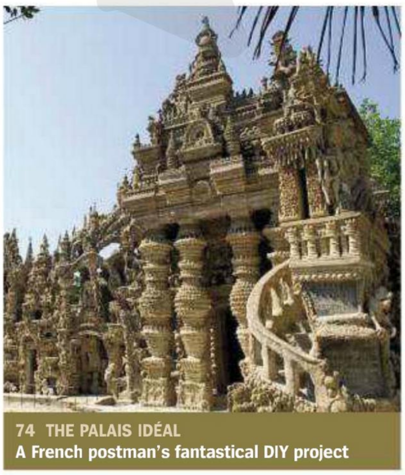
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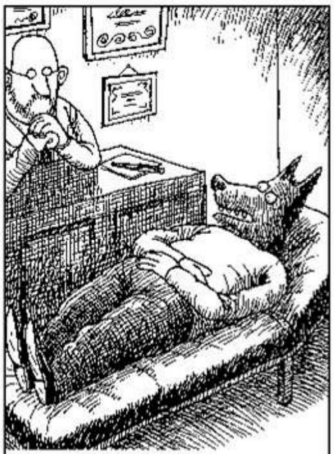
editorial

Dog-heads and God-heads

A forgotten monstrous race

Our cover story this month (pp32–37) focuses on the cynocephali, or dog-headed men, reports of which have enjoyed a curious persistence in human history, from the 4,000-year-old rock carvings found in Libya to the dog-headed saints of Christianity, and from the 'monstrous races' of mediæval maps and travellers' tales to the sightings of werewolf-like creatures reported from around the world (and sometimes out of it) even today – the 'Beast of Bray Road' is just the most famous of a number of contemporary manifestations of the ancient dog-head. Despite this venerable history, such half-human creatures have scarcely received their fortean due – until now. We hope that you'll welcome Matt Salusbury's attempt to put this 'monstrous race' back on the map as he traces the strange history of the dog-headed men.


"To be honest it's a bit of a treat – I'm not usually allowed on the couch"

MARTIN ROSS

God on the brain

One of the illuminations in the Scivias ("Know the Ways") of Hildegard of Bingen (1098–1179) shows the Benedictine abbess receiving one of her celebrated visions and dictating the results to the monk Volmar, who acted as scribe and secretary to the 'Sibyl of the Rhine'. The picture (see p46) shows what look like tongues of fire or tendrils of energy reaching down from above to envelop and enter the abbess's head. To her 12th-century contemporaries, this would have been understood as a representation of a vision direct from God. And this was how Hildegard herself came to interpret the strange experiences that had assailed her since childhood, causing her much misgiving and uncertainty before she came to accept them as gifts, no matter how disturbing, of divine origin. More recently, there has been speculation that Hildegard suffered from some debilitating form of migraine or perhaps temporal lobe epilepsy (currently a prime suspect in many anomalous experiences, from alien abductions to ghost encounters). But if, as seems perfectly possible, Hildegard did suffer from some form of neuro-physiological condition interpreted by her as a spiritual state, does that mean her experiences should be written off or explained away as neurologically based delusions?

It's the sort of question at the heart of the long-running debate about what we might call the biology of spiritual experience – a topic that Charles Foster explores in this issue (pp42–47) and next. Do recent discoveries in neuroscience uncover the 'causes' of religious belief and spiritual experience by identifying specific types of brain activity, or do they offer correlates to them? Does what we know about the action of certain psychedelic drugs explain religious visions and epiphanies by demonstrating that specific neural pathways can be turned on and off by such pharmacological interventions? Or does the man who was buggered by a drug-induced dinosaur warn us off such neat equivalences?

There's much matter for debate in Charles's articles (not to mention in a provocative interview with Rupert Sheldrake; see pp38–40) and we look forward to an interesting mailbag this month and next.

To return to Hildegard: how should we best make sense of her phenomenally active and creative life? In that life – spurred on directly by her 'visions' – she became a rare female voice in the male-dominated mediæval Church and a respected religious leader, won renown as a healer and prophet, wrote plays, herbals and spiritual autobiographies, invented her own language and found time to produce an extraordinary body of unique, chant-based liturgical music that has only begun to be appreciated in the last couple of decades. What, if anything, does the diagnosis tell us about the life? Or as Fiona Maddocks asked in her book about this mediæval polymath, "Where is the migraine in the music?"

RIP William Roll

We were saddened to hear of the death of parapsychologist Bill Roll, whose particular expertise in poltergeist cases led him to investigate the case of Tina Resch (which he wrote about in **FT190:38–44**). You'll find a full obituary for Bill on p26 of this issue, and for those interested in Tina's tragic case, the American film-maker James A Conrad explains the entire legal background and Tina's current circumstances, and supports her claim to innocence, at http://bit.ly/ydNfuF (jamesaconrad.com). Her next "possible" parole review date is 14 April 2012.

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Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!
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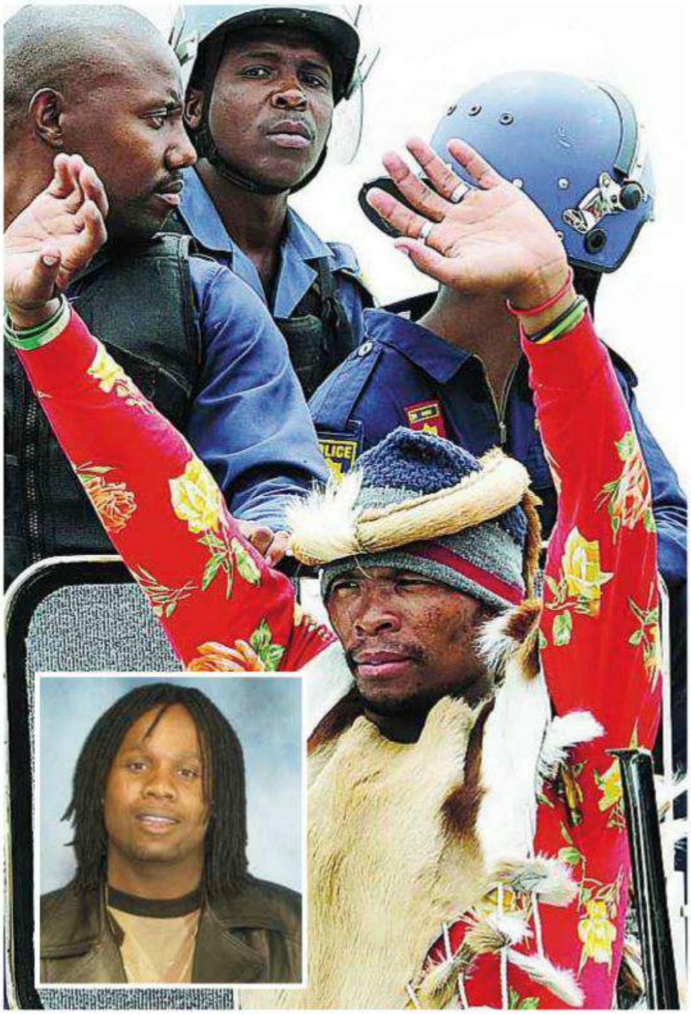
‘Zombie’ singer returns

Man claims to be poisoned Zulu folk star now brought back to life after zombies kidnapped him



LEFT: This man claims to be the famed Zulu folk musician Khulekani Khumalo, who officially died in 2009.

INSET: Khumalo before his poisoning.

FACING PAGE: Clerveus Narcisse, said to have died in 1962 and revived in 1980.

A South African man who claims to be a famous dead singer is in custody until DNA tests determine his identity. The man says he is Khulekani “Mgqumeni” Khumalo – an award-winning *maskandi* (traditional Zulu folk music) artist who apparently died in 2009, after drinking a poisonous concoction he got from a traditional healer. He turned up at the family home in Nquthu near Dundee, KwaZulu-Natal, on 28 January, saying zombies had kidnapped him. He claimed to have woken up in a field in Johannesburg before making his way home. Kinsfolk, including two wives and his paternal grandparents, insisted he was genuine – but police said he would be charged with fraud if DNA testing showed he was lying. But if his DNA matched up with Khumalo, then the police would have to go to court to exhume the body buried in early 2010 in a high-profile funeral at the KwaGxobanyawo cemetery attended by local politicians, the media and fans.

The alleged reappearance of Khumalo caused a sensation, and on 5 February thousands of fans flocked to KwaZulu-Natal to see the official “unveiling” of the claimant. The police used water cannon after people pushed and shoved one another to get a glimpse of him. Using a loudspeaker, he told the crowd that he was not dead, but had disappeared after he fell victim to *ukuthwetshulwa* (spirit-capture). He said he was kept in a cave by zombies in Johannesburg’s Driefontein for two years, forced to sing and had to eat mud to stay alive. “The people who captured me shaved my dreadlocks because they wanted to put a nail in my head. They wanted to make me a zombie,” he said. “I have always been alive. I have lost a lot of weight but it is me. I would like to thank Shembe for freeing me out of that place.” He said his captors had changed his name to Sphamanda Gcabashe. “They even organised an identity document for me.” He ignored fans’ requests to sing but instead recited his clan names. Some reports call the man Sibusiso John Dlamini-Gcabashe, aged 28 or 29, and state that his fingerprints had proved his identity and hence his imposture.

He told the crowd he had fallen victim to spirit-capture

At a press briefing later, Dumisani Goba, founder of the South African Traditional Music Awards (Satma), asked the claimant when last he had won the award. He did not answer and instead said: “My voice may sound different but it will take time.” Fans were also surprised to see that he sported a gold tooth, which no one remembered the singer having. His traditional facial cuts also appeared to be cruder than those of the singer. There was speculation that the man was wanted for robbery in Johannesburg. Bongani Mncube, who claimed to be a relative of the singer and to know him like the “palm of my hand”, was sceptical of the supposed resurrection. “This man is a fraud, a bogus criminal who has well rehearsed,” he said – an opinion shared by the singer’s maternal family, the Mselekus, who had organised the funeral. On the other hand, his paternal family were convinced that their famous kinsman had returned. It was rumoured that he had been estranged from his father’s family.

Two of the singer’s lovers took opposite sides. Zehlise Xulu, who has a 10-year-old son by him, said: “My son travelled all the way from Johannesburg with the hope of seeing his father, only to find

MEDICAL MIRACLES
Nails, bullets, pens, pool-cue tips surgically removed
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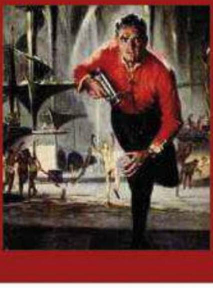
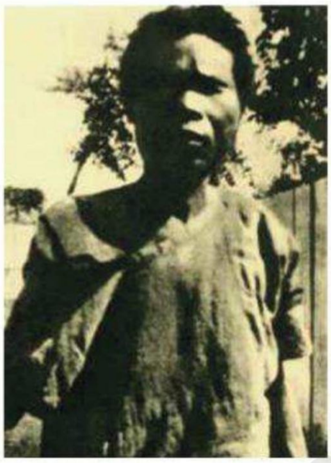


MIND NUMBING
Did the CIA try to erase memories with head-blows?
PAGE 16

SACRED SCRAPPERS
Priests & monks getting physical at the Church of the Nativity
PAGE 20

that the man was a hooligan." However, Nonhlanhla Majola said: "I still believe that this is Mgqumeni [Khumalo] and I will stand by him through thick and thin. I know that this is the father of my child."

Khumalo had released his fifth album, *Magic*, in 2008 and it sold 78,000 copies within a month of release. He was also the producer and composer of other successful *maskandi* groups that included Amagcokama, Ithwasa Lami, Abakwethu and Idlamanzi. His family has yet to receive royalties from his albums as he died intestate. *timeslive.co.za, 5 Feb; BBC News, 6+7 Feb; sowetanlive.co.za, news24.com, 6 Feb; iol.co.za/dailynews, Independent, The Sowetan, 8 Feb 2012.*



In March 2009, hundreds of people visited a village in the Transkei, in the eastern Cape area of South Africa, to hear the story of Nkosinathi Ntsente, a minibus driver who claimed to have returned from the dead. He said he was shot dead in 2001 – or rather, he witnessed his doppelgänger being shot, taken to a mortuary and cut open to remove vital organs before being put in a fridge. After witnessing the funeral, he was taken to a dark forest by four female witches where he met lots of other abducted people. "I was released after the witches said I was too powerful for them to make me do evil things," he said. Eight years after his supposed death, relatives found him wandering the streets [**FT254:9**].

Clerveus Narcisse, a peasant from the remote northern hills of Haiti, was buried in May 1962, after being pronounced clinically dead. In January 1980, we are told, he officially came back to life, having spent the intervening years as a zombie in a voodoo priest's plantation. When he was buried, a coffin nail made a hole in his right cheek, near his mouth.

Zombies are allegedly created by secret voodoo cults, like Bizango and Blengenden, as punishment for social transgressions ranging from adultery to land theft. It is not the fear of zombies that concerns Haitians, but the fear of becoming one. The secret cults are viewed as aberrant by the mainstream voodoo majority.

Wade Davis, author of *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1986), obtained samples of *coup poudre* (zombie powder), which he found contained tetrodotoxin, a powerful nerve toxin about 500 times stronger than cyanide, which can be collected from readily obtainable puffer fish (*Diodon hystrix* and *Sphoerides testudineus*). The toxin produces a profound paralysis closely resembling death. The after-effects, should the victim survive, closely parallel those suffered by the zombies whom Davis observed and interviewed in Haiti. There is the sense of floating above one's body, glassy eyes, respiratory distress, hyperventilation, a weak pulse and blueness of the skin due to impaired circulation. [**FT78:30**].

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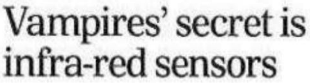
CIGARETTE-SMOKING MONKEY WEDS HIS LOVER IN INDIA

International Business Times, –July 2011.

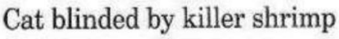


Vampires' secret is infra-red sensors

D.Telegraph, 4 Aug 2011.

A woman becomes invisible at 46

D.Mail, 30 June 2011.

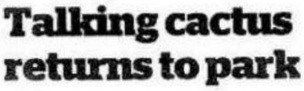


Cat blinded by killer shrimp

Wolverhampton Express & Star, 16 Aug 2011.

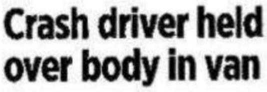
WHEELIE BIN SAVES TODDLER

Plymouth Sunday Independent, 26 June 2011.



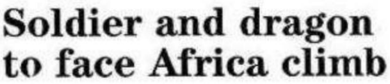
Talking cactus returns to park

<i>, 15 Aug 2011.



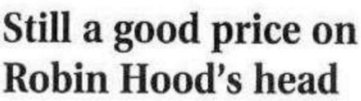
Crash driver held over body in van

Aberdeen Press & Journal, 2 July 2011.



Soldier and dragon to face Africa climb

Newark Advertiser, 4 Aug 2011.

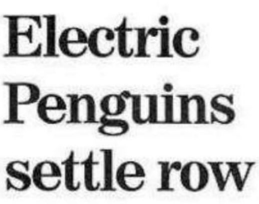


Still a good price on Robin Hood's head

Nottingham Post, 30 July 2011.

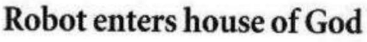
Goblin paid off policitians' bets

Gloucestershire Echo, 30 July 2011.



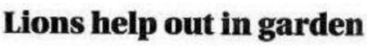
Electric Penguins settle row

Irish Independent, 6 Aug 2011.



Robot enters house of God

The Press (Christchurch, NZ), 14 July 2011.



Lions help out in garden

North Devon Gazette, 3 Aug 2011.

GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS 2012
BURSTING WITH AMAZING NEW RECORDS
CERTIFICATE
GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS

POLO
BRITISH COUNTRY SPIRIT
68
GUINNESS WORLD RECORDS

WORLD'S SHORTEST

Jyoti Amge (above), who stands just 62.8cm (24.7in) tall, was recognised as the world's shortest woman by the *Guinness World Records* when she turned 18 on 16 December. She has achondroplasia, a form of dwarfism, and stopped growing shortly after her first birthday. She is due to appear in two movies in 2012 and dreams of becoming a Bollywood film star. Guinness representatives from London measured her at a ceremony attended by about 30 relatives and friends in the central Indian town of Nagpur where she lives. "In accordance with our guidelines," said a Guinness spokesperson, "Jyoti was measured three times in 24 hours by a doctor." She weighs only 5.4kg (12lb), and is 7cm (2.76in) shorter than Bridgette Jordan (22), from Sandoval, Illinois, who had held the title since September. The shortest woman ever recorded was Pauline Musters (1876–1895) of the Netherlands, who stood 61cm (24in). *BBC News, 16 Dec; Irish Independent, D.Mail, 17 Dec 2011.*
PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES / AFP / PUNIT PARANJPE

Junrey Balawing (at right in picture left, with a two-year-old boy) from Sindangan in the southern Philippines turned 18 on 12 June 2011, when Guinness declared him the world's shortest man at 59.93cm (23.6in). He stopped growing when he was two, according to his father, a blacksmith called Reynaldo. His three younger siblings are all of normal size. He can't stand for long and is dependent on his mother, Concepcion, 35. "Junrey can only walk with some help and he can't stand for too long because he's in too much pain," she said. He is more than 7cm (2.76in) shorter than the previous record holder, Khagendra Thapa Magar from Nepal, who had held the record since October 2010. The shortest man ever recorded was Gul Mohammed of India (1957–97), who stood 57cm (22.4in). A heavy smoker, he died at the age of 40. *D.Mirror, 10 Mar; Metro, 10 Mar, 13 June; BBC News, 12 June 2011.*
PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES / MCT / DREW BROWN

Guinness World Records is currently attempting to verify the height of Chandra Bahadur Dangi, a 72-year-old Nepali. If it is confirmed that he is only 56cm (22in) tall, he will be not only the current shortest man, but also the shortest who has ever lived. *dailymail.co.uk 15 Feb 2012.*

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Witch cottage found

Ten Pendle witches were hanged for murder by sorcery

UNITED UTILITIES

ABOVE: This ruined cottage near Pendle Hill could be the site of the lost Malkin Tower. **BELOW:** Pendle Hill and its surroundings.

Water engineers working for United Utilities in the shadow of Pendle Hill, Lancashire, brought in archæologists to survey the area. They discovered a 17th-century cottage under a grass mound near Lower Black Moss reservoir in the village of Barley. It contained a sealed room, with a mummified cat bricked up inside a wall. Witchcraft historian Simon Entwistle speculated that this building could be the lost Malkin Tower, "a source of speculation and rumour for centuries", the site of a notorious meeting of the Pendle witches on Good Friday 1612. The nine women and two men were charged with causing death by witchcraft and after a string of trials, all but one of them were hanged on the nearby moors on 20 August that year. The trials were unusual in two respects: the official publication of the proceedings in *The Wonderfull Discoverie of Witches in the Countie of Lancaster* by Thomas Potts, clerk to the court; and in the number of witches hanged together. It has been estimated that all of the English witch trials between the early 15th and early 18th centuries resulted in fewer than 500 executions.

A cat may have been walled in alive to ward off evil spirits

The excavated building hasn't been lost for 400 years, as it contains a 19th-century kitchen range. Many items from the building's latter years, such as Victorian crockery, a tin bath and a bedstead, were discovered around the site. It is thought the cat was immured alive to protect the householders from evil spirits. A few dozen such feline sacrifices, right up to the late 19th century, have been discovered. Some were put in roof spaces as a magical protection against fire [See **FT52:6–7, 75:13, 77:7**]. *[R] D.Telegraph, BBC News, 8 Dec 2011.*

SIDELINES...

HUMAN TORCH

A man believed to be in his early 40s burst into flames while standing outside a vinyl record store beside a Swedish railway station. After a while, he started to yell, but shocked passers-by just stood and stared. Then a tram driver ripped his coat off and managed to put the fire out with another man's help. The victim was hospitalised with severe burns. A police spokesman said there was no indication of foul play. *disinfo.com, 26 Nov 2011*.

LOVE ME TENDERS

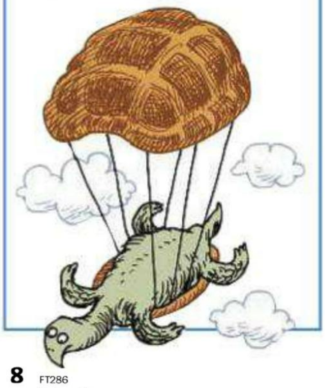
Mervyn Smith, 66, from Stroud, Gloucestershire, has spent the last 42 years taking his wife June all over the country to photograph different fire engines. In November, he was hoping to sell his 180 albums, containing 40,000 snaps of different tenders, for £10,000 after transferring the images to computer disk. *Sun, 10 Nov 2011*.

RAT CRISIS

So many rats have drowned in Cambodia's worst flooding in over a decade that its lucrative export trade has plummeted. The country usually exports 17 tonnes of rats to neighbouring Vietnam every year – presumably for eating. *[AFP] 3 Nov 2011*.

FLYING TORTOISE

Toffee the tortoise was carried off by a crow, but was found alive five weeks later in a cemetery, over walls and across a busy road from her home. She had scratch marks on her shell. "We had all but given up hope," said owner Lucy Hiscock, from the Isle of Wight. *Metro, 10 June 2011*.



MARTIN ROSS

Kinsfolk are reunited

Two tales of long-lost family members meeting up again

After drifting for 33 days in the South Pacific, Uein Buranibwe (53) and Temaei Tontaake (26) probably thought that their chances of survival had become impossibly slim. Then, on 27 November, the two fishermen from Kiribati (pron. Keereebass) made landfall on a remote atoll in the Marshall Islands. This was cause enough for celebration – but they then discovered that the descendants of an uncle of Mr Tontaake, believed to have drowned at sea in the 1950s, were living on the atoll.

The uncle, named Bairo, had ended up on the same atoll, Namdrik, after getting lost during a fishing trip from Marakei atoll in Kiribati. Stranded 350 miles (560km) from home with no way to return, he married a local woman, had children and became part of the community.

The pair (above, with Bairo's descendants) became lost while returning from a 30-mile (50km) nocturnal fishing trip in Kiribati, a string of atolls formerly known as the Gilbert Islands. Their satellite navigation system had broken down, and they survived on what fish they could catch, often going for days without food and having to drink seawater.

For three days, the US Coast Guard mounted an aerial search, but without success. "We heard the sound of a plane but we didn't see it," said Mr Tontaake. They also saw fishing boats, but none was close enough to see the drifting fishermen.

When they arrived on Namdrik, (population about 600), the first residents they met took them to the only person who spoke their language, and they were astonished to find she was a descendant of Bairo's. "Now we know what happened to my uncle," said Mr Tontaake, happy to have solved a 60-year-old family mystery. *[AFP] Independent, D.Mail, 13 Dec 2011.*

GETTY IMAGES / AFP / GIFF JOHNSON

GETTY IMAGES / AFP

His uncle's descendants now lived on the tiny atoll

An Indonesian girl swept out to sea in the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami and long feared drowned has been reunited with her parents seven years later. Eight-year-old Meri (or Mary) Yuranda was ripped from her mother Yusnidar's grasp when her home village of Ujong Baroh in the province of Aceh was hit by the powerful wave. Meri's elder sister was also swept away and remains missing. Aceh was the worst-hit region, losing 168,000 people out of a total of 230,000 tsunami victims in a dozen nations.

On 21 December 2011, a 15-year-old girl called Wati showed up in a café in the city of Meulaboh, saying that not long after the wave hit she was found and "adopted" by a woman who forced her to beg in the streets, sometimes until one in the morning. The woman kicked her out when she stopped bringing in money. She then set out to find her family, but all she could remember was the names of her village and her grandfather, Ibrahim. She persuaded a taxi driver to drive her from Banda Aceh, the provincial capital, to Meulaboh, the nearest town to her village. Someone at the café was acquainted with Ibrahim, a well-known religious leader in Ujong Baroh, who had indeed lost grandchildren in the tsunami. Ibrahim sent word to her parents, Yusnidar and Tarmius (or Yusniar and Yusuf), who confirmed that the girl was their daughter. "The birthmarks on her belly, and a mole and scar on her face proved the little girl was mine," said Yusnidar (above, with Meri), who like many Indonesians uses just one name. "When I saw my mother, I knew it was her, I just knew it," said Wati, who was given that name by the woman who found her. *D.Telegraph, Guardian, 23 Dec 2011.*

SIDELINES...

PLONK IN THE NIGHT

The Court Oak pub in Harborne, Birmingham, is allegedly haunted by a fussy ghost that smashes bottles of wine that aren't to its taste. Around Hallowe'en each year, it creates havoc in the cellar until the house wine is upgraded to one it approves of. Regulars claim to have seen a ghostly man in his 60s. The pub is built on the site of a 17th-century hanging ground. *Sun, 31 Oct; Irish Examiner, 1 Nov 2011.*

HY ENERGY

Two hyenas escaped on 2 November after chewing through an electrified fence during a power cut at a zoo in Johannesburg. *Sun, 3 Nov 2011.*

SOVIET FUN

Four students in Moscow have opened a Museum of Soviet Video Games. Located in a Stalin-era bomb shelter, the museum has 32 arcade games, including *The Turnip Strength Tester*, where players pull a lever as hard as possible to wrench a turnip from the ground. Then there's *Information*, a "game" that simply displays a book of Soviet infantry tactics; and *Vikrorina*, where the aim is to identify street warning signs. *MX News (Sydney), 13 Dec 2011.*

TWO PEACOCKS?!

A surprise raid on Acapulco jail in western Mexico by 500 police turned up 19 prostitutes, two sacks of cannabis, 100 fighting cocks and two peacocks. They also found six female prisoners in the men's wing, numerous bottles of booze, and flat-screen televisions. *Independent, 9 Nov 2011.*

GECKO WARNING

Medical authorities in the Philippines have issued a warning against the medical use of geckos. The wall-climbing lizards are exported to Malaysia, China and South Korea, where they are used as aphrodisiacs and as traditional medicine for asthma, AIDS, cancer, tuberculosis and impotence. An 11oz (312g) gecko sells for at least 50,000 pesos (£730). *[AP] 15 July 2011.*

FORTEAN FOLLOW-UPS

FURTHER DETAILS ON STORIES PREVIOUSLY COVERED IN *FT*

MORE IRISH FIRE DEATHS [FT281:14–15, 283:9]

A Dublin inquest opened on 23 November 2011 into the death of Declan Dowling (59) of Bulfin Gardens, Inchicore, whose body was found at his home on 7 March 2011. It was the third case of possible spontaneous human combustion in Ireland in recent months. Dowling was found crouched on the floor in his back room. His fingertips and clothing were burnt, as was his stomach, but the surrounding area was untouched and there was no significant source of air to fuel a fire. He was a heavy smoker, but the post mortem showed he had not inhaled any smoke, suggesting he was already dead before the fire started. He had a high level of alcohol in his blood. Prof. Marie Cassidy, the state pathologist, put forward the "human candle" hypothesis, in which body fat is the fuel and clothing the wick, causing very slow combustion at a low temperature – but this was just conjecture. Verdict: death by misadventure.

Conor Brady was an "evening town reporter" on the *Irish Times* in early 1970 when the Dublin gardaí told him about "a case of spontaneous human combustion down in Stoneybatter". Brady recalled: "Half an hour later, I was at the house in Prussia Street. All that remained of an elderly lady was a long mound of fine ash and her two feet virtually untouched at the other end. The carpet underneath and the chair in which she had been sitting were scorched yet not burned. The melted television screen, 10 feet [3m] away, was evidence of intense heat, but there was no fire path between this and where the woman had died. None of the professionals could identify any fire source. But the incineration of the victim would have required a temperature of perhaps 1,000 degrees, it was reckoned by the fire officer.

"I telephoned the city coroner, Prof. Paddy Bofin, [who] wanted to know more. Was there evidence of intense heat but little flame? Yes. Was the destruction of body tissue almost total? Yes. Did I, by any chance, notice the presence of smuts or fatty deposits on smooth surfaces in the room? Yes, the place was covered with them. Bofin whooped with delight.

"'Mr Brady, you've given me the most *splendid* news. I have a wager with the Coroner of the City of Westminster, Gavin Thurston, that whichever of us gets an authenticated case of this, the other will stand him a champagne dinner!'"

In the event, the *Irish Times* news editor spiked the report. There's a curious lexilink in this story: Fort describes the mysterious death by fire of a writer called J Temple Thurston, a possible case of SHC (*Wild Talents*, ch.10). *Irish Times, 24 Nov 2011.*

AFLOCKALYPSE NOW! [FT272:4–5, 274:20]

"Thousands" of blackbirds (later revised to "about 100") fell dead over Beebe, Arkansas, on New Year's Eve, in an eerie replay of the previous New Year's Eve, when 3,000 to 5,000 were found dead in the same town. As before, scientists pinned the blame on loud fireworks that sent the birds into a panic, causing them to collide with each other, as well as with power lines, houses and cars. But the mystery deepened when it emerged that the police had imposed an impromptu firework ban after the first birds fell at 7pm in an effort to prevent a repeat of the previous massacre. Anyway, fireworks go off every year all over the world, so why aren't mass bird deaths more common? Weather conditions are unlikely to have caused the latest deaths, as conditions were clear and calm over Arkansas that night. The 2010 Beebe bird rain – followed within days by another in Louisiana – was thought by some to signal the end of the world. *Huffington Post, 1 Jan; NY Daily News, Sun, 2 Jan; <i>, 3 Jan 2012.*

On 13 December 2011, thousands of migratory birds died on impact after apparently mistaking a Wal-Mart car park and other areas of southern Utah for bodies of water and plummeting to the ground. Officials said stormy conditions could have confused the flock of grebes, a duck-like aquatic bird probably *en route* to Mexico. *(Brisbane) Courier-Mail, 16 Dec 2011.*

WIPING THE SLATE CLEAN [FT282:20]

Graham Preston, 50, from Bexleyheath, southeast London, lost more than 20 years of his memory after a wasp sting caused an acute allergic reaction that left him brain damaged. When he awoke from a week-long coma in the summer of 2010, he thought he was in his late 20s. His last memory was from his time in Australia in 1988. His wife Lorraine, 48, said: "When our children came to see him in hospital he said, 'Who's that?'" When shown a photo of his daughter Shelley's wedding, a week before he was stung, he thought the bride was his wife. The former builder had to learn to walk again. He now has a 10-minute memory, and doctors fear he may never recover. However, he said: "I am happy living in the present". *Sun, 15 Dec 2011.*

Gary Rogers, 43, from Basildon, Essex, had a heart attack on holiday in Turkey with his family in 2010 and was taken to hospital and put into a medically induced coma. He was flown back to Essex, where he was woken up, but thought it was 1994. The former building maintenance worker didn't recognise his teenage daughters and

SIDELINES...

CANINE ART

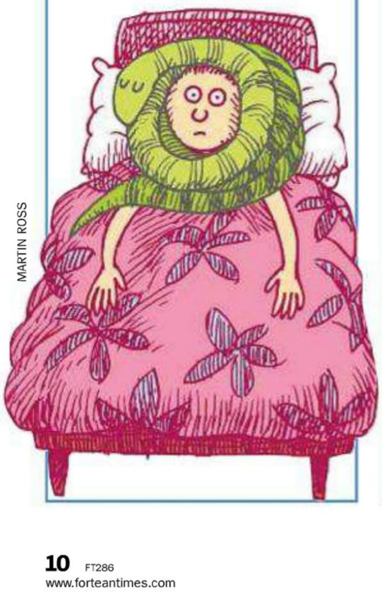
Avon and Somerset Police have released details of 27 calls received about "alien events" near Glastonbury and Street in the last five years. In April 2010, a caller described how UFOs had taken over their sitting room, which had inspired their dog to draw pictures on the windows. The caller also said that saints were looking through a window and hoped to pass on messages from our intergalactic neighbours. *D.Telegraph, 19 Dec 2011.*

SNAKES ON A TRAIN!

Passengers on a train in Vietnam fled after discovering four bags of venomous king cobras under a seat. The snakes, believed to have been destined for restaurants in Hanoi, were released into the wild. *D.Telegraph, 31 May 2011.*

SLEEPING WITH SNAKES

A man who made his pregnant lover sleep with his 10ft (3m) boa constrictor to keep it warm was arrested in Terni, Italy. Meanwhile in Poland, Iga Radkiewicz, 19, a student in Krakow, who thought she was being hugged by her boyfriend, woke up to find a 6ft (1.8m) corn snake squeezing her thighs. The harmless reptile had escaped from a nearby shop five hours earlier. *Sun, 23 Nov; Metro, 24 Nov 2011.*



MARTIN ROSS

believed he had split from Linda, his wife of 25 years. He only had a memory span of a few hours, but this had improved after months of hard work and help from his family. *Metro, Sun, 20 Dec 2011.*

RETURN OF THE BLOB [FT283:22]

ForteanTimes
THEY CAME FROM HOLLYWOOD

Another blob of translucent goo, known as "star jelly" or *pwdre sêr*, was found in Worcester on 22 December by Matthew Marton, 38, during his lunch break. In November, further such blobs were reported in Ireland, by a Sligo hill walker and a farmer in Co. Laois. Could they have fallen to Earth during meteor showers, or were they the albumen of frogspawn? If the latter, why were there no nuclei of eggs? Speculation continues… *Irish Times, 26 Nov; D.Mirror, 23 Dec 2011.*

DEER MUTILATION [FT285:5]

DNA tests on a roe deer carcase found near Woodchester Park, Gloucestershire, in early January – and on another carcase found seven miles (11km) away – have failed to detect any evidence that they were killed by an ABC (alien big cat). Robin Allaby, associate professor at Warwick University's School of Life Sciences, tested 45 samples for the saliva of any canid or felid-related species and found fox DNA on one carcase and canid DNA on the other. He said that further tests would probably show the latter also to be from a fox. The absence of felid DNA, of course, fails to prove the absence of ABCs. Woodchester Parish councillor Paul Syrett said he was disappointed but still convinced big cats prowl the area. "I think the community around here is convinced something is going on," he said. "Too many references, too many pictures, too many people seeing this animal."

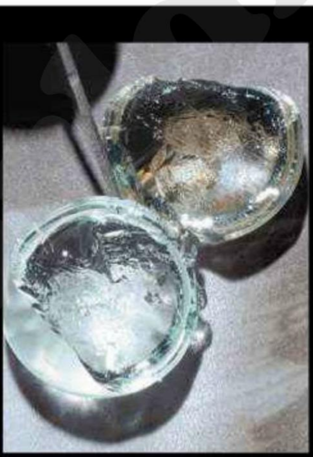
Three dead wallabies were found in a field 12 miles (19km) from Woodchester Park on 6 January, two days after the deer discovery, but this didn't make the news until 25 January. They were stripped to the bone with their internal organs left neatly beside their bodies. All had puncture wounds to the neck, consistent with a big cat attack. The marsupials were part of a farmer's private collection on an estate near Stroud. "This has all the hallmarks of a panther or puma kill," said animal expert Frank Tunbridge, 65. "There could be no creature other than a big cat that could bring down and kill these wallabies. The field was surrounded by a 7ft [2m] fence and there were no apparent entry signs – so the predator must have leapt over it. The killer struck over two nights. The first night he killed two wallabies, stripped one of the carcases down and hid the other under a pile of leaves and straw. Then he came back and killed a third – devouring his further kills. A fourth wallaby appears to have died from a heart attack." DNA sampling was not mentioned. *dailymail.co.uk, 25 Jan; Sun, 26 Jan; University of Warwick and National Trust Press Release, 1 Feb; Coventry Telegraph, BBC News, 2 Feb 2012.*

ForteanTimes
2012

BLUE SPHERES MYSTERY

At about 4.10pm on 26 January, Steve Hornsby, 61, went into his garden in Bournemouth, Dorset, to get some logs for the fire from his garage. Suddenly the sky went very dark and then a strange yellow colour, a prelude to a 20-second hailstorm. When it was over, he spotted a lot of light blue balls, 3cm (1.1in) in diameter, all over his lawn. Many were broken, but some remained intact.

"They were definitely not there before the storm," he said. "They were gelatinous and almost impossible to pick up. I had to get a spoon and flick them into a jam jar. They had an exterior shell with a soft inside. They only landed in our garden in an area of a couple of hundred square metres. There must be about 20 complete spheres. They aren't sticky and don't smell or float. I've been an aircraft engineer for many years and I've never seen anything like it. I thought it could have been some kind of atmospheric pollution like a chemical that has been released into the atmosphere, got sucked into a storm cloud and solidified and then released in droplets with the hailstones."


A BOUDREAU

The Meteorological Office announced that the balls were "not meteorological", while Josie Pegg, a science research assistant at Bournemouth University, speculated that they might be marine invertebrate eggs, which "have been implicated in previous 'strange goo' incidents". However, subsequent analysis at Bournemouth University showed that the balls were sodium polyacrylate, also known as waterlock, used in gardening or agriculture to improve soil, as well as in nappies. Mr Hornsby said he had never used the product and was adamant that it was not on his lawn before the hailstorm. However, this polymer can absorb as much as 200 to 300 times its mass in water; tiny dry granules could have fallen into the garden unnoticed, it was argued, where they absorbed water and grew in size… what, in 20 seconds? And it was hail, not liquid water. Anyway, in this scenario, the freak hailstorm was merely coincidental. *BBC News, 27 Jan; Guardian, 30 Jan; D.Mail, 31 Jan, 4 Feb 2012.*

SIDELINES…

EARLY WARNING

The behaviour of animals at Washington's National Zoo has backed the belief that animals can sense a coming earthquake before humans. Red ruffled lemurs, flamingos, orang-utans and gorillas acted strangely up to 15 minutes before a 5.8-magnitude quake hit the US east coast on 23 August. One gorilla grabbed her baby and ran to the top of a climbing structure. *NY Daily News, 24 Aug 2011.*

INVISIBLE BEGGAR

Fed up with being shunned by passers-by in Subotica, Serbia, Nemanja Petrovic, 42, deserted his begging spot, leaving just his cap, shoes and a sign reading: "Invisible Beggar". When he returned, he found a crowd and his cap full of money. "Now I just put down the sign and a pair of shoes as a prop, and wait for the donations to roll in while I have a coffee over the road," he said. *Sunday Times, 2 Oct 2011.*

GET MIAOWT

When villagers in Moelfre, North Wales, heard frantic miaowing from inside a public recycling bin, they assumed it was a pregnant cat that had gone missing three days earlier, and called the fire brigade and RSPCA. When attempts to open the bin failed, it was driven to a specialist engineering firm 20 miles (32km) away, where steel saws were used to cut off the top and reveal the source of the noise – a battery-powered toy cat. *D.Mail, 1 Dec 2011.*

TWIN-TAILED SHEEP

There are only 1,000 Dolan sheep in the world and they have become the latest collector's item for rich Chinese. The owner of one in Kashgar, Xinjiang province, was recently offered £1.4 million for it. The breed – originally developed in Kashgar for quick growth and extra meat – has a distinctive curved nose and twin tails, as well as long floppy ears. *D.Telegraph, hotnews.cultural-china.com/blog, 28 Sept 2011.*

SIDELINES...

NOISY CHICKENS

Hens' clucking noise in Danish is *gok-gok*; German hens go *gak gak*; Dutch hens go *tok tok*; Finnish and Hungarian hens go *kot kot*. The rather superior French hen goes *cotcotcodet*. *D.Telegraph, 27 Aug 2011*.

PIPING HOT PI

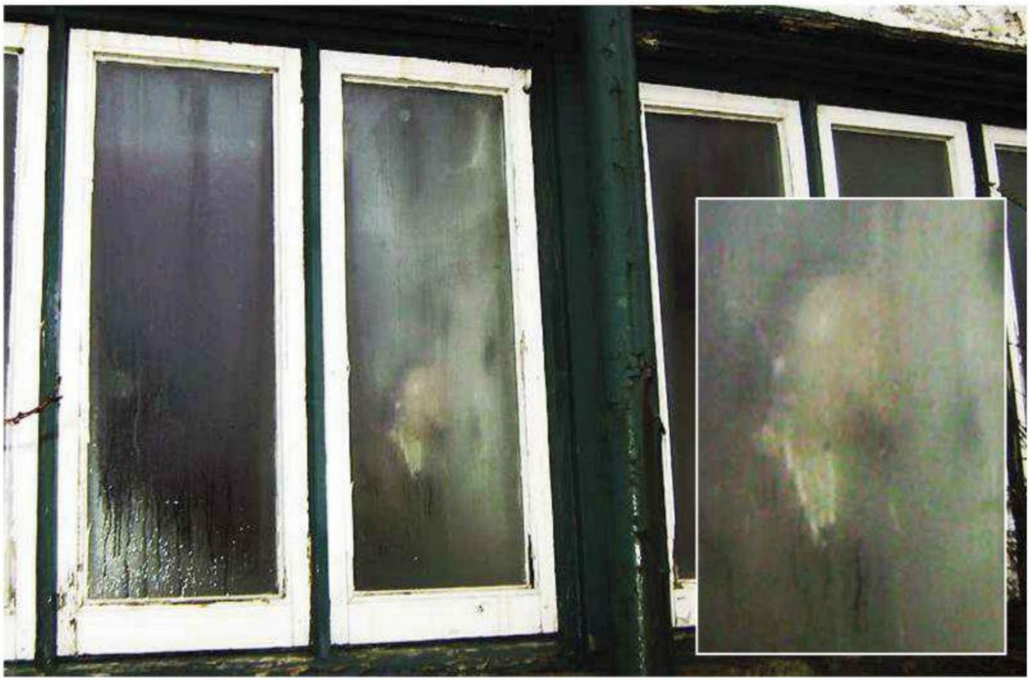
Shigeru Kondo, 56, has calculated pi to a record 10 trillion digits, using a computer he built at home in Nagano, Japan. However, his wife Yukiko complained about the heat generated by the computer, which kept room temperature at 40°C (104°F). "We could dry the laundry immediately," she said, "but we had to pay £250 a month for electricity." According to Robert M Young's *Excursions in Calculus* (1992), only 39 digits of pi are needed to describe a circle the size of the observable Universe accurate to the size of a hydrogen atom. *Sunday Times, 23 Oct 2011*.

FLESH-EATING BANANAS

An email and text-message hoax last November warned people in Mozambique against eating bananas from KwaZulu-Natal province in neighbouring South Africa as they were supposedly infected with the flesh-eating disease necrotising fasciitis. Banana sales in the capital Maputo slumped despite the fact that Mozambique doesn't import bananas from South Africa. *[AFP] 2 Dec 2011*.

MARTIN ROSS

KNOW THE FACE, CAN'T QUITE PLACE IT



CASCADE NEWS

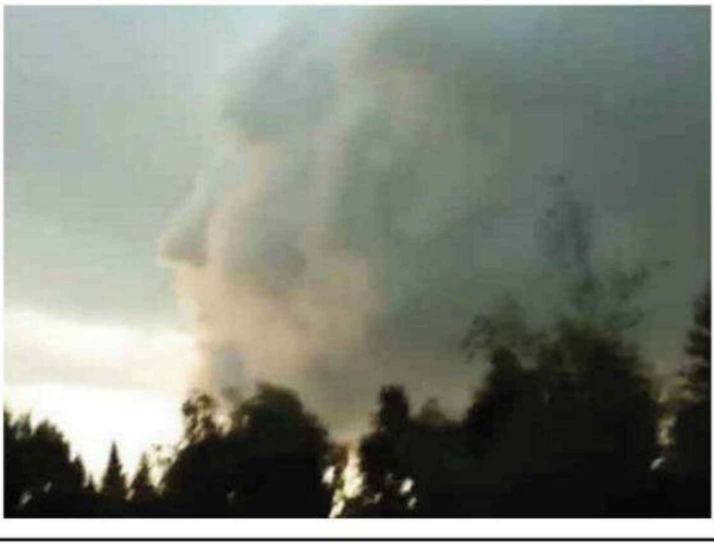
CASCADE NEWS

GHOST IN THE WINDOW?

Demolition supervisor Robert Johnson took this photograph of Meadowbank House, a derelict Victorian guesthouse in Kendal, Cumbria, shortly before it was knocked down in January, but only later noticed the ghostly figure peering through the window. "You can see the jewellery on her and everything," he said.

"The day before we took the photo we were stripping the building inside and I noticed the chandelier swinging on its own," said his colleague, Stuart Shan. "We said at the time the place felt strange. My hairs were standing on end when I saw the photo." Dave Armstrong, of Kendal contractors Cox and Allen, said: "There was only a black wall behind the window, we had taken everything out – there were no visible features or anything with a skin colour."

David Grimshaw, 59, a former resident, said the figure is the ghost of his mother Frances Grimshaw, who worked at the guesthouse and died nearly a year ago aged 87. "I'm totally convinced," he said. "No one else looks like that. She had glasses and big earrings and she used to wear a dress with a bow at the front. She used to stand in that room for hours on the phone – it was the guesthouse reception and she took bookings from there. She would have been horrified if she had known the house was being demolished because it was beautiful, so maybe that is why she's turned up." *telegraph.co.uk, 26 Jan 2012*.



CANADIAN CLOUD FACE

Denis Farmer filmed this impressive profile in a dark cloud formation from his backyard in the town of Grand Falls, New Brunswick, Canada. His three-minute clip was uploaded to YouTube on 1 August 2011 and was viewed 6,617 times in the subsequent 48 hours. Inevitably, some saw the face of Jesus, others the face of the Devil. Whoever it might resemble, it's a fine cloud simulacrum. *dailymail.co.uk, 3 Aug 2011*.

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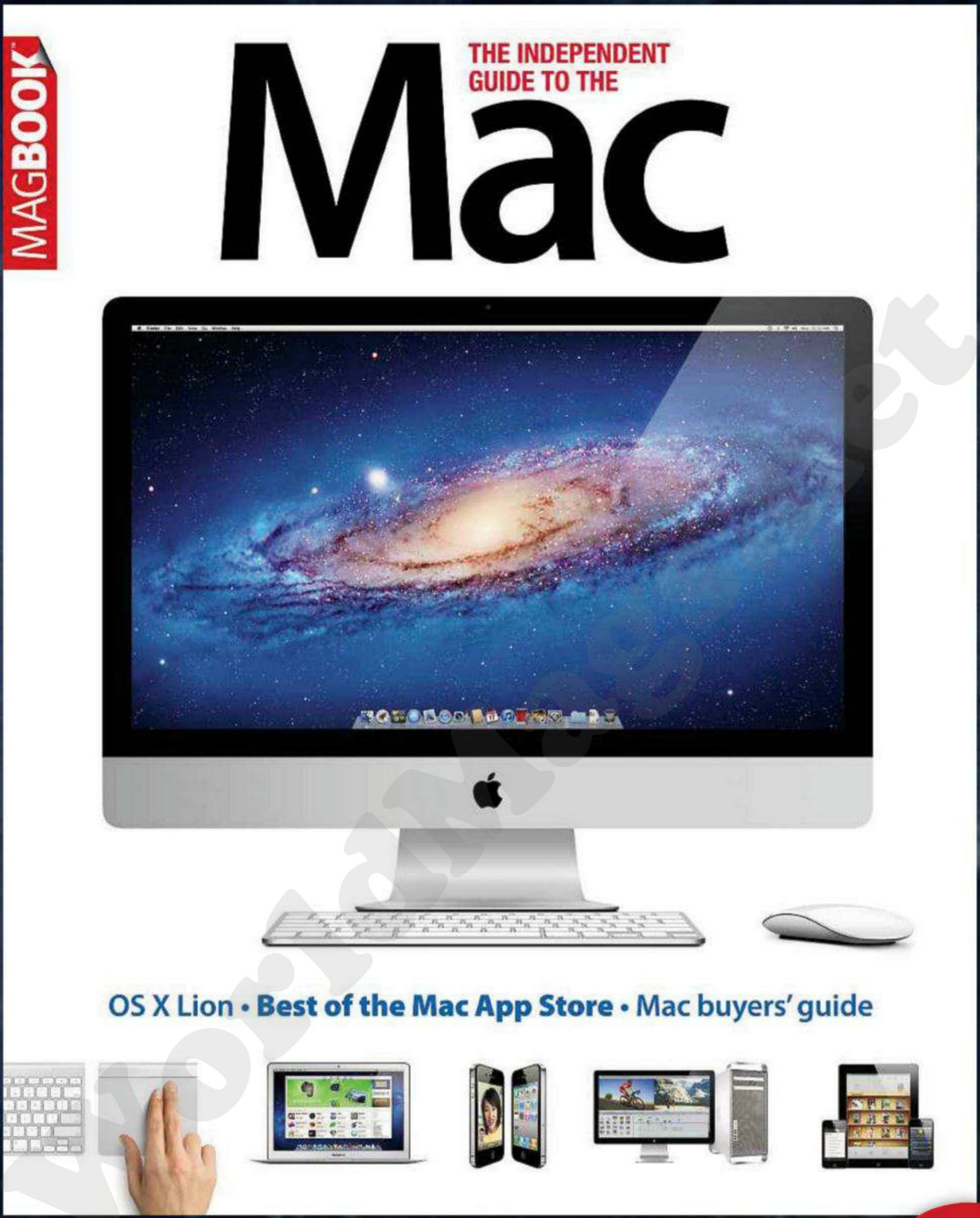
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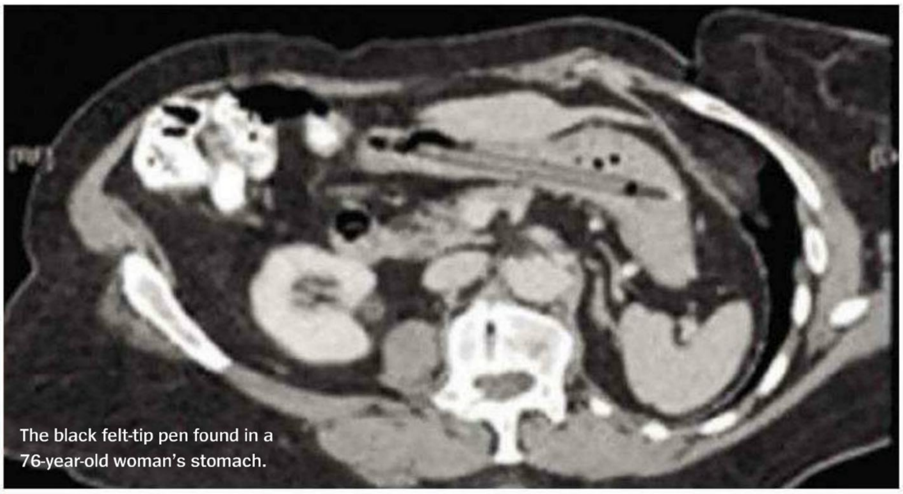
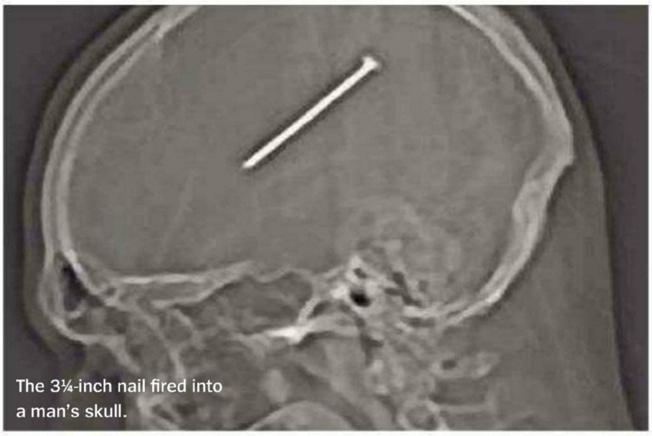
NOW JUST CUT IT OUT!

NAILS, BULLETS, AIR-GUN PELLETS, FELT-TIP PENS – EVEN THE TIPS OF POOL CUES – CAN WIND UP NEEDING SURGICAL REMOVAL

A man accidentally shot a 3¼in (8.25cm) nail into his skull while building a shed, but was recovering after it was successfully removed from the centre of his brain. Dante Autullo, 34, was in his workshop in suburban Chicago, Illinois, on 17 January when a nail gun recoiled near his head. His fiancée, Gail Glaenzer, said she had no idea a nail had entered his skull when she cleaned a cut on his forehead, but convinced him to go to hospital the next day after he felt nauseated. As he was rushed to another hospital in Oak Lawn for surgery, he posted a picture of the astonishing X-ray on his Facebook page. Doctors told him that the nail came within millimetres of the area used for motor function. They were shocked he was "walking and talking" despite having the nail in his brain for 36 hours. Neurosurgeon Leslie Schaffer removed it by putting two holes in the skull on either side of the entry point, then extracting the nail along with a piece of skull.

Autillo was in good spirits after the two-hour surgery. He thought that the nail gun had simply hit his forehead, but realised later that when the gun came in contact with his head, the sensor recognised a flat surface and fired. While there are pain-sensitive nerves on a person's skull, there are none within the brain itself. A hospital spokesman said the part of the skull that was removed for surgery had to be replaced with a titanium mesh. *BBC News, telegraph.co.uk, 21 Jan; (Queensland) Sunday Mail, 22 Jan 2012.*


The black felt-tip pen found in a 76-year-old woman's stomach.

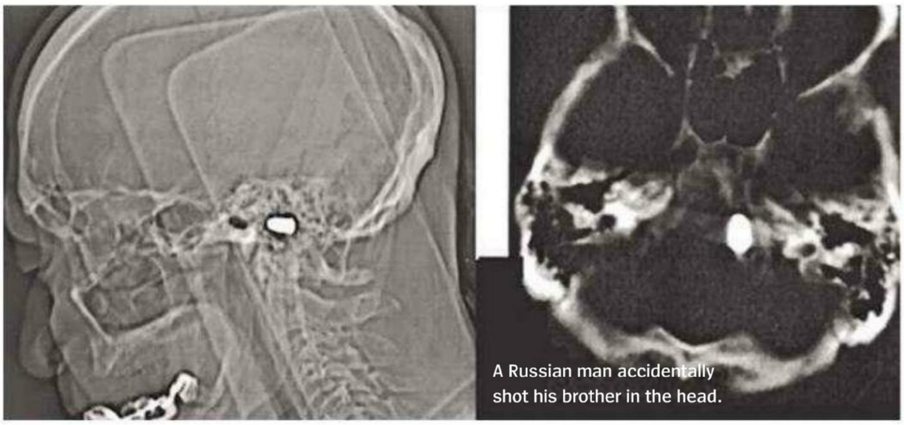

The 3¼-inch nail fired into a man's skull.

MASONS / SWNS.COM

ASSOCIATED PRESS

A Russian man who was accidentally shot in the head by his brother when he was three spent the next 82 years without suffering any ill effects, despite the bullet being lodged in his foramen magnum, the opening at the base of the skull through which the spinal cord passes. Doctors opted against operating at the time because they believed the risk of severe nerve damage was too high and, against the odds, he made a full recovery, according to a report published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*. When the 85-year-old, who went on to become an award-winning engineer, recently went for a CT scan following a heart problem, doctors noticed the bullet but, to their astonishment, they could not find any evidence of neural damage. They decided there was no point in taking it out.

"High-speed missiles, like a bullet, can cause great damage and usually do," said Dr David Ross, an emergency physician at Penrose Hospital in Colorado Springs, Colorado. "However, because they are high-speed, they generate a lot of heat. That heat usually means the missile is sterile – meaning it is unlikely to serve as a basis for infection if it stays in one place for many years. So if it did not cause much damage, which it apparently didn't, it was unlikely to cause him ongoing troubles." *dailymail.co.uk, 29 Dec; Metro, 30 Dec 2011.*


A Russian man accidentally shot his brother in the head.

Chantel Faill, 31, endured constant headaches, infections and flu-like symptoms for 12 years without knowing why. Then she coughed violently and the 2cm tip of a pool cue came out of her nostril, covered by "unhealthy" tissue that had grown over it. In 1999, the mother-of-three was in a pub when a male friend holding a pool cue in the crook of his arm gave her a bear hug. The cue speared the top of her mouth and she was taken to hospital, where she was given pain relief. No one realised the tip had come away from the cue and pierced a cheekbone. It worked its way into a sinus before finally moving into a nasal passage. She had surgery to completely clear her nose and was recovering at home in Broughton, Lincolnshire. *Sun, 17 Nov 2011*.

Tommy Bennett had an airgun pellet lodged in his jaw for 41 years without knowing – it was spotted on an X-ray taken during tests for a dental bridge. "The lady doing the X-rays asked if I had a stud in my ear," said Mr Bennett, 51, a grandfather-of-three from Washington, Tyne and Wear. "I told her I didn't and she sent me back to the medical technician. He asked me, "Have you been shot?""

It was then Mr Bennett remembered an accident in 1970, when he was 10. He and a friend were fooling around with a weapon. "He said he was aiming at my foot but it went in just under my eye," he recalled. "I didn't think the pellet had gone in, but the next day it was all swollen up and I had a black eye." *D.Mirror, 8 Dec 2011.*

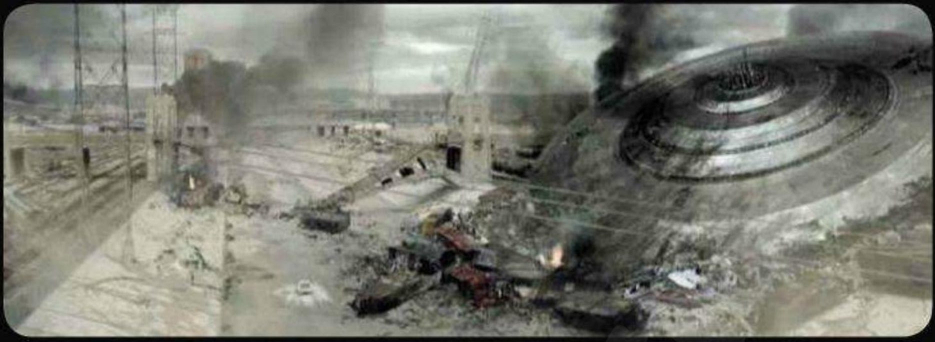
A woman of 76 had a black felt-tip pen removed from her stomach, 25 years after swallowing it accidentally. In 1986, she had tripped while holding her tongue down with it to check her tonsils in the mirror, and the pen went down her throat. Her husband and GP wouldn't believe what had happened when the pen failed to show up on hospital scans. She forgot about it until she recently went to see a specialist about her stomach pains, weight loss and diarrhœa. A gastroscopy at the Royal Devon & Exeter Foundation Trust clearly showed a "linear foreign body" in her stomach.

The unnamed woman had surgery, and doctors were stunned to find the pen (though corroded and "somewhat gooey") was still in working order and had caused no gastric damage. A doctor used it to write "Hello" to the patient after the operation.

Her symptoms had in fact been caused by an infected intestine, not the pen – but Dr Oliver Richard Waters decided to remove it anyway. He concluded his *British Medical Journal* report: "This case highlights that plain abdominal X-rays may not identify ingested plastic objects and occasionally it may be worth believing the patient's account however unlikely it may be." ***The Sideshow, 20 Dec; Sun, D.Mirror, 22 Dec 2011; The People, 1 Jan 2012.***

2012 WATCH

DAVID SUTTON COUNTS THE DAYS AND READS THE END OF THE WORLD NEWS



DOOMSDAY: THE COMMERCIAL

Trying to sell consumer durables by proclaiming that the end of the world is nigh might seem like a counterintuitive marketing strategy (unless we're talking mineral water and ammunition; see below), but one of the biggest television commercials shown in the US during last month's Super Bowl tapped into the End Times zeitgeist by employing an impressive array of 2012 imagery. The epic ad opens on a just-post-apocalyptic scene – vast swathes of ruined urban real estate, smashed freeways and collapsed buildings; in the foreground flaps a torn newspaper, its headline reading "2012 Mayan apocalypse: Will the world end today?". But out of the rubble – and to the strains of a song proclaiming "Looks Like We Made It" – emerges a dust-covered pick-up, in which one man and his dog proceed to drive through the wreckage and across a landscape full of active volcanoes and vast craters made by still-smoking asteroids. They arrive in another devastated town, to be met by a trio of regular guys who also seem to have survived the last day on Earth.

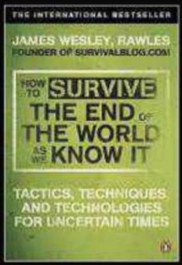
"Where's Dave?" asks our hero.

"Dave didn't drive the longest-lasting, most dependable truck on the road. Dave drove a Ford." And so, we leave our snack-munching, truck-driving men looking skyward as a rain of frogs falls from the heavens, plopping on the bonnets of the Chevy Silverados ("From the beginning of the work day to the end of the world") that have saved their bacon.

We can only assume the addition of this fortean staple to the other, more familiar tropes of 2012 is down to a conflation of a Biblical plague of frogs (Exodus 7:25–8:11) with the climactic amphibian shower in the 1999 film *Magnolia*. To see the ad, go to http://bit.ly/zAcwvg (nfl.com).

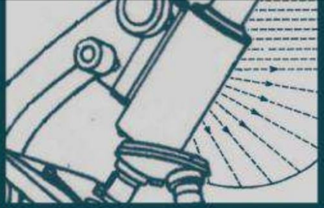
BE PREPARED

According to Glenn Beck, "It's never too late to prepare for the end of the world as we know it." It's a message that's seemingly been taken to heart by a growing subculture of self-described "preppers". Yes, just like last time around (in 1999; see **FT129** in particular), when fears of a national or worldwide meltdown due to alien invasion, cometary catastrophe or the Y2K bug, fuelled the (literal) bunker mentality with which many Americans greeted the impending Millennium. Rather than putting their faith in the sterling qualities of the Chevy Silverado, preppers are apparently turning their homes into "survival centres" and laying down some serious stores for when it all goes tits-up. Patty Tegeler, a resident of Virginia, believes the "economy is about to fall apart", and has installed a large generator and water tanks and received a two-year supply of freeze-dried food sent by her (equally paranoid?) sister as a birthday present.


THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER
JAMES WESLEY RAWLES
FOUNDER OF SURVIVALBLOG.COM
HOW TO SURVIVE THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT
TACTICS, TECHNIQUES AND TECHNOLOGIES FOR UNCERTAIN TIMES

Presumably, Patty reads the Survival Blog of James Wesley Rawles, a former Army intelligence officer and author of *How to Survive the End of the World as We Know It*. Rawles – who worries about "higher interest rates, margin calls, stock market collapses, bank runs, currency revaluations, mass street protests, and riots", believes the "worst-case end result would be a Third World War, mass inflation, currency collapses, and long term power grid failures". His book – also known as the Preppers' Bible – is just one way of turning growing fears into cash. Robert Vicino, a real estate agent, has been creating a luxury 'Noah's Ark' shelter in the Mojave Desert, and most of its $50,000 units are sold; as are those in another shelter in Indiana. He hopes to complete another 20 "facilities" this year. "But beyond that, we're looking at doing 20 in China, three in Taiwan, Romania, Russia, everywhere."

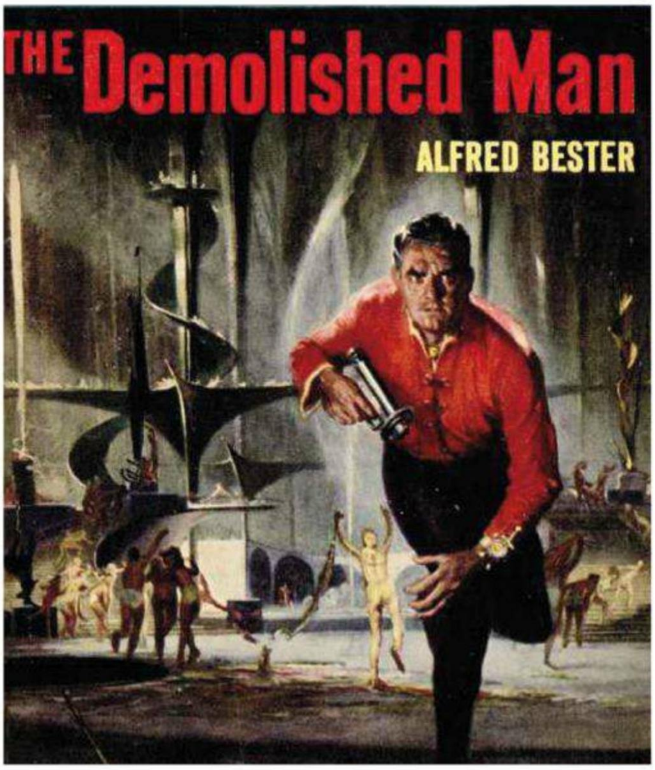
And now the preppers are the subject of their own reality show, Doomsday Preppers, in the first episode of which "viewers meet a retired couple who have 50,000 pounds of food stored in their doomsday-proof home built of steel shipping containers, an urban survivalist in Los Angeles prepping for a severe earthquake and a young, outgoing Texan ready to bug out when an oil crisis creates havoc." *[R] 21 Jan; ABC News, 6 Feb; USA Today, 8 Feb 2012.*



MATT PATTINSON

A CIA MEMORY ERASER?

Traumatic amnesia has long been a staple of thrillers and detective fiction – but, reports **DAVID HAMBLING**, the CIA's infamous MK-ULTRA project might really have tested it out.



The CIA's infamous MK-ULTRA programme of the 1950s and 60s has always been a popular topic for forteans, with its hallucinogen experiments on unwitting victims and suggestions of mind-control. But other aspects of the project have been largely ignored, aspects that might have been more successful. Perhaps this is because the technology involved was less sophisticated, more of a blunt instrument. And I do mean a blunt instrument.

The documentation from the Senate hearing on MK-ULTRA included a section on "Support of Research on the Mechanism of Brain Concussion", Subproject 54.[1] The reason for the CIA's interest is explained by a clinical definition of concussion as "an essentially transient state due to head injury which is of instantaneous onset, manifests widespread symptoms of purely paralytic kind... and is always followed by amnesia for the actual moment of the accident."

In other words, it should be possible to knock someone out with a blow to the head without them having any memory of what happened. With the aid of "the perfect concussion", a victim could be rendered unconscious while agents search them, steal or substitute items, or plant tracking devices or other items on them. When they come to, they would not have any memory of being assaulted.

The CIA noted the importance of not giving any warning of an ambush; recalling an assailant leaping out brandishing a club just before your missing time would be a bit of a giveaway. Likewise, the importance of not leaving any bruises or other marks of trauma that could be noticed afterwards. However, if these criteria were met, the victim could be ambushed repeatedly: "Under these conditions the same technique of producing the concussion could be re-used many times without disclosure of its nature."

The question was how to deliver the blow. A number of approaches were suggested. The simplest was a variation on the old sap or cosh, a leather bag filled with lead, but shaped like a pancake to spread out the impact as much as possible, used in traditional fashion. A more technically sophisticated approach resembled a Jack-in-the-box with a knockout punch, described as "concealed or camouflaged spring-loaded impacting devices". Or the victim could be shot with a sand- or lead-filled bag fired from a shotgun, much like the 'bean bag' rounds since adopted by police to subdue suspects.

Alternatively, the victim could be concussed without physical impact. This might simply be an explosive blast wave, like a stun grenade, but the CIA also explored the idea of using an intense sound source that caused resonance within the skull. Just as the right musical note can cause a wine glass to vibrate and shatter, the right frequency will cause the skull to resonate, producing concussion. This would require the sound wave to be focused on a specific point, which is not an insurmountable technical challenge. "The blast duration would be in the order of a tenth of a second. Masking of a noise of this duration should not be too difficult."

Agents who can disappear from your memory would be pretty well unstoppable

All we can say for sure about the research is that it was active in 1956–57, when $24,025 was spent on work into concussion. Tests were carried out on a fluid-filled glass simulated skull and the effects measured. The testing facility included a blast range, and the CIA report indicates that considerable data had been gathered about the effects of different impacts and blast waves. We don't know what happened to the research after that; large amounts of MK-ULTRA documentation were shredded before the Senate got to them.

Oddly enough, Admiral Turner, the head of the CIA during MK-ULTRA, seemed to have no memory of the concussion programme when questioned by the Senate in 1977, claiming that the project was cancelled and never carried out.[2] A later discussion indicated that the research might have been done by the Office of Naval Research on behalf of the CIA and this had caused confusion.

We do know that there was later research by the Pentagon on the use of flashing lights to cause amnesia, an effect proven in the laboratory using rats in 1985.[3] The idea had already featured in science fiction. Both Alfred Bester's *The Demolished Man* (1953) and the 1981 Michael Crichton movie *Looker* have characters with light-based devices that made them invisible by causing the victim to forget them. (And how could we forget the Neuralyzer wielded by the *Men In Black*?)

This research does not appear to have had any practical outcome. However, more recently a number of strobe lights have been developed as non-lethal weapons, such as the LED Incapacitator. This was developed by Intelligent Optical Systems Inc. for the US Department of Homeland Security.[4] The LEDI resembles a flashlight but is capable of "overwhelming the subject both physiologically (temporarily blinding him) and psychophysically (disorienting him)" at up to 15m (50ft).

In 2007, the LED Incapacitator was undergoing human testing to confirm its exact effects. Since then, there has been no response to requests for information from the makers or the DHS. It may be that the LEDI has fulfilled the promise of earlier research and can cause short-term amnesia. In which case, it's not surprising it's being kept secret. Agents or Special Forces who can disappear from your memory would be pretty well unstoppable.

Such a device would also have less legitimate uses. The CIA noted that concussion amnesia might be of use "as a tool in brainwash therapy". Interrogation, what interrogation?

NOTES

1 http://bit.ly/ybHLIL (wikipedia).
2 http://bit.ly/AERkNP (druglibrary.org).
3 http://1.usa.gov/wWVuqU (dtic.mil).
4 http://bit.ly/wsjon9 (intopsys.com).

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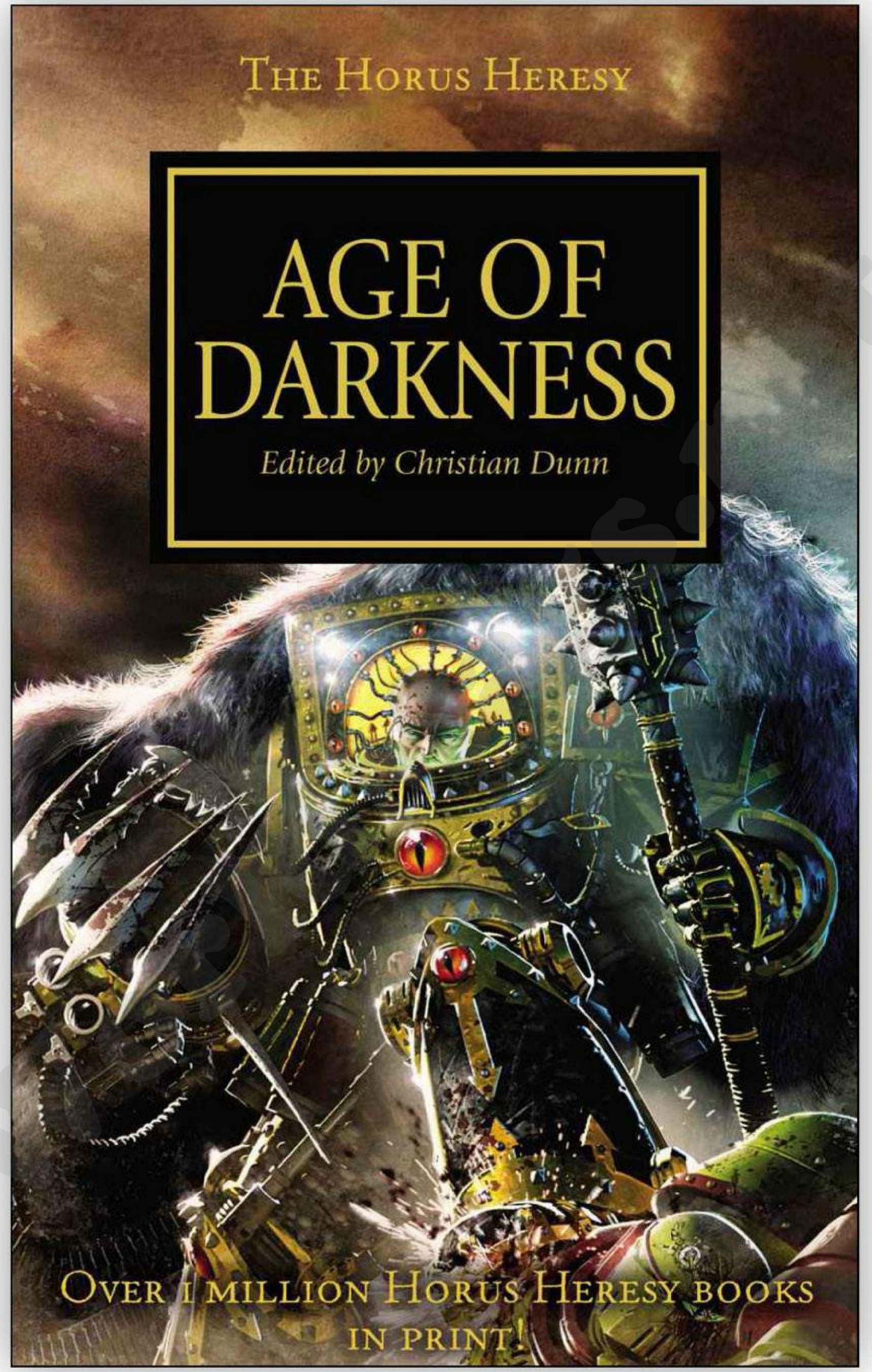
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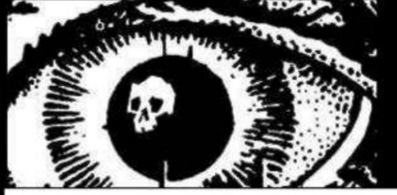


MATT PATTINSON

GHOSTWATCH

ALAN MURDIE recounts two recent stories involving some unusually communicative spirits.

GETTY IMAGES EUROPE FOR AUSTIN REED / GARETH CATTERMOLE

INTERACTIVE APPARITIONS

One characteristic of ghosts seen over the last century is their apparent tendency to keep a still tongue. In contrast with the talkative apparitions of previous centuries, modern spectres are largely mute, rarely speaking or interacting with observers. This has led some sceptical writers to consider ghosts as being socially determined hallucinations, reflecting contemporary concerns and prevalent notions about the afterlife. (See for example, RC Finucane: *Appearances of the Dead*, Prometheus, 1982, rev. 1996, and Shane McCorristine: *Spectres of the Self: Ghost-Seeing in England 1750–1920*, Cambridge University Press, 2010). However, ghosts that communicate and interact with witnesses still occur, as shown by two modern examples reported recently.

TV presenter Anne Diamond was scared off buying a house near Warwick Castle in 1999, according to a story she told on a special programme broadcast by the Bio Channel in June 2011. She told viewers about how she abandoned plans to purchase the property after encountering what she believes was the ghost of its former owner, a woman she had previously met only once in the flesh, some months earlier.

In 1999, Ms Diamond was looking for a home for her and her four sons following the break-up of her marriage. On viewing the Warwick property, she was shown around by its resident owner, a friendly, elderly lady who had been born in the house and lived there all her life, raising her own family there. She told Anne that she was sad to be leaving for a modern flat, but her grown-up children were pressing her to sell. However, she was positive about the idea of Anne and her family becoming the new occupiers. She decided to buy, and following the viewing, she telephoned the estate agents and offered the asking price, only to be told that the lady had decided not to sell after all.

Some six months later, the estate agent contacted Anne, saying the house was now empty and back on the market. Collecting a set of keys, she returned to the house, accompanied by her mother. She recalled arriving at the property and that, “at the front door, I was fiddling around trying to find the right key when the door opened and there was the same little white-haired old lady who’d first shown me around. She left us to explore the place. But this time the house was bare and empty.” All furniture and fittings had been removed, “except what seemed to be a large wooden box lying in the centre of the living room. My mother sat on it then jumped up, saying, ‘I don’t like this… it’s the shape of a coffin’.” At this point, both Anne and her mother became frightened. Unable to find the old lady again, they made a sharp exit.

LEFT: Anne Diamond thinks she was let into a house for sale by the deceased former owner. **OPPOSITE:** New York-based researcher Stacy Horn.

> “I can only believe that it was the old lady’s ghost that showed us round”

On returning to the estate agent, she explained they had been shown in by the old lady only to be told: “That can’t have been her because she died a couple of months ago. The children are selling it now, and you had the only keys”. Anne went back to find the wooden box in the middle of the room had disappeared. The local postman told her that the old lady “was in the house for two weeks before anyone found her. In the end, they had to break in – and there she was, just lying dead on the living room floor.”

Anne said: “I can only believe that it was the old lady’s ghost that showed us round and that there was indeed a coffin on the living room floor.” Not surprisingly, she decided against buying the house, and says of the old lady, “I believe she is still there in the fabric of the house.”

Interestingly, a second case involving the apparition of an old lady and a strange box was published on the Internet by Stacy Horn, a New York-based writer, on 3 October 2011. Ms Horn has previously published a book on the unpublished cases in the archives accumulated by parapsychologists Robert and Louisa Rhine at the Rhine Research Laboratory at Durham, North Carolina (a research opportunity to be envied by many a fortean scholar!). In her personal blog posting, she describes what she calls “my one and only personal experience with the unexplained”, which occurred in her childhood in the 1960s.

When six or seven years old, she wandered away from her home on Long Island and passed by “the home of an elderly woman in her yard with a bunch of cats.” On Stacy asking if she could stroke the cats, the old lady readily granted permission and after a few minutes kindly invited Stacy inside for milk and biscuits. “When I was done, she walked me home. Turns out I was only a few blocks away from my house. My mother punished me for straying too far and that was that.”

A year later, Stacy decided to go back and visit the old lady and her cats, but on her arrival at the house the whole place was in complete disrepair, with the roof partly caved in and the front yard overgrown. “I stood there trying to understand what I was seeing. I knew even at that young age that this was a lot of damage, and that the place had been neglected for a long time. I also knew this meant that something was off about my visit with the lady. So I just stood there, completely flummoxed…”

After a few minutes, a woman came out of the house next door and asked me if she could help me.

“Where is the lady?”

“What lady?”

“The lady who lives here.”

Then she said very gently, “No one has lived here for a very long time.”

Ms Horn recently wrote to the current owners of the building, but has received no response regarding either its history or whether it is haunted today. However, she kindly sent me further details of her childhood experience and what happened next.

After talking of meeting the old lady and the cats with the neighbour, Stacy was firmly told the old lady hadn’t lived in the property for years. “I knew she was telling me that the lady was dead and that she was dead before I had met her. Again, I wasn’t scared. I don’t think I really got death yet. I also wasn’t thinking ghosts. For me ghosts were cartoons… and the lady I met was a person, a solid, breathing, talking person… I had seen her, talked to her, played with her cats, sat at her table and eaten her cookies, and when she walked me home, I had held her hand. There was nothing spooky about my encounter – it was all completely ordinary. I couldn’t explain it, and so I continued to stand there, trying to make sense of it all.”

As with Anne Diamond’s experience, Stacy decided to go inside the property to look around once again. “The table where I had sat with my milk and cookies was still there, but piled with debris that had come in from the hole in the roof. The whole interior was well on its way to be taken over by the elements. Everything I saw seemed to confirm that I couldn’t have met anyone here." This place clearly had been abandoned for a long time. She was perplexed rather than frightened. However, then she heard a voice. "It was very close, like someone was talking quietly right beside me. It said, 'Look in the bedroom'. Or 'Go into the bedroom'." Recalling this, she states: "You would think when one hears a disembodied voice one would remember the exact wording, but once again I was not scared or even particularly startled".

Stacy went into the bedroom and saw a brown supermarket carton on the floor. However, unlike the unpleasant box in the house in Warwick, this one contained a pleasant surprise. "Inside the carton were four kittens. The kittens were a present from the old lady, I decided. I can't say I 'knew' that; it was just the explanation I gave myself for the voice and the presence of a box of kittens. It was also an explanation that served my immediate purposes: I wanted those kittens. I picked up the box, took the kittens home, asked my mother if I could keep them and she amazingly said yes."

Recalling her experience, she states: "Because this experience had such a happy outcome, it made me open to ghosts and anything paranormal. What's so scary about ghosts if they lead you to kittens?" She considers such experiences "could be evidence for something that continues after we're gone, but there are other explanations. And for me those explanations might be just as exciting." Interestingly, Stacy's writing as an adult has included a book on cats; perhaps her action in rescuing the kittens and her ongoing love of them was tied up with aspects of the whole experience.

Sources: *Celebrity Ghost Stories UK*, The Biography Channel, June; *D.Express*, 7 June; *D.Mail*, 17 June 2011; Stacy Horn: *Unbelievable: Investigations into Ghosts, Poltergeists, Telepathy, and Other Unseen Phenomena from the Duke Parapsychology Laboratory*, 2009; blog: www.echonyc.com/~horn/stacy, 3 Oct; with thanks to Stacy Horn, *pers. comm.*, 17 Oct 2011.

STACY HORN

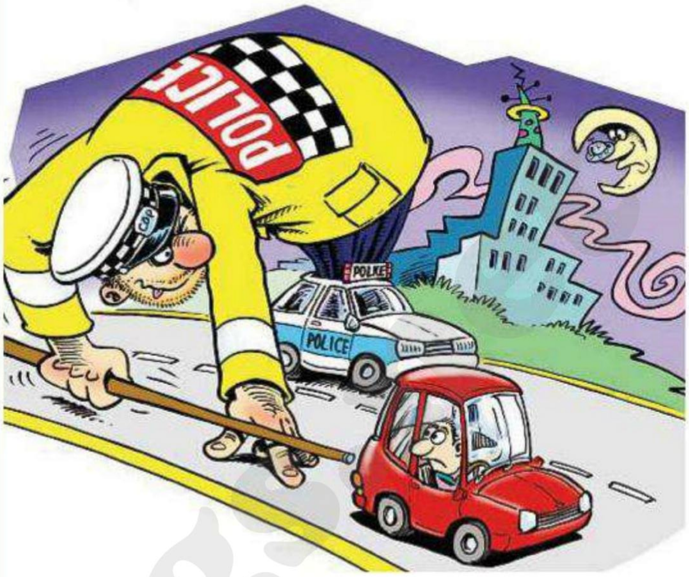
Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

152. RED CARS

The myth

Red cars cost more to insure.



HUNT EMERSON

The "truth"

It has long been widely believed that insurance companies charge higher premiums on red cars than on those of any other colour. The reason given for this discrimination varies; the most common explanation is that blood-hued motors appeal primarily to young men (or, more widely, to flashy, arrogant people) – the very drivers who are most likely to have accidents. Others say that the red vehicle is irresistibly attractive to thieves and vandals, making it a poor insurance risk. Some even build one urban myth on the foundations of another, claiming that traffic police play "snooker" – booking a red car, then a yellow, then another red, then a green, and so on. There are also, interestingly, two related sub-myths: one suggesting that white cars are the *cheapest* to insure, because they are visible at night; and one claiming that UK motorists mistakenly believe that the "red car rule" applies here, when in fact it is a strictly US condition. But the insurance industry in both countries insists that there's no truth to it: insurers neither know nor care what colour your car is. It is not one of the factors that determines insurance costs. And research by pro-motorist bodies, such as the Automobile Association, agrees.

Sources

http://ind.pn/bNxUZb (independent.co.uk); http://bit.ly/wPB7Zd (blog.moneyshake.com); http://bit.ly/xVBLYN (aviva.co.uk); http://on.msnbc.com/iBxkXO (msnbc.msn.com); http://bit.ly/eZvnZy (4autoinsurancequote.org).

Disclaimer

But perhaps they would say that? If you have any evidence, other than foaflore and urban mythology, in favour of the Persecuted Red Chariot Hypothesis, please race over to *FT*'s letters page.

Mythchaser

A reader wants to know whether it's true that Britain's nuclear-armed submarines are instructed to listen out for *Today*, on BBC Radio 4, every morning – knowing that if it ever fails to appear, that can only be because London has been invaded or destroyed. And assuming that's not true, does anyone know where the story began?

THIS IS THE BBC!
and all's well...

FOR MORE MYTHCONCEPTIONS, GO TO:

www.forteantimes.com/strangedays/mythbusters

WorldMags

GODLY BEHAVIOUR

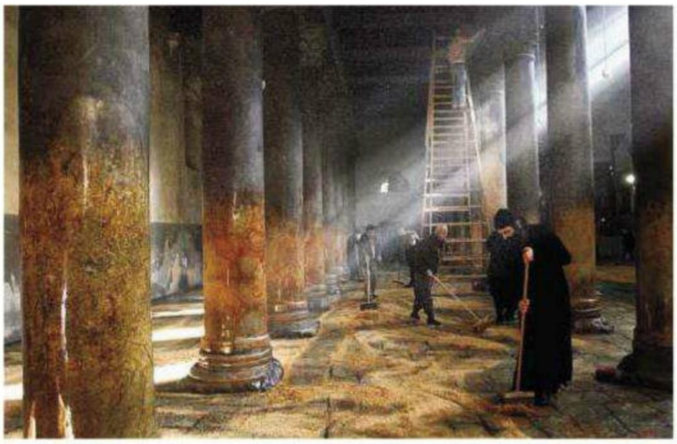
Turf wars at one of Christendom's holiest sites, theft of sacred relics, plus the canonisation of an Amerind princess.

GETTY IMAGES / AFP / MUSA AL SHAER

LEFT: Rival factions at the Church of the Nativity get ready to rumble.
BELOW: Cleaning up their own mess.

TRADITIONAL CHRISTMAS BRAWL

The annual clean-up at Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, in preparation for the Orthodox Christmas celebrations on 6 January, turned into a mass brawl on 28 December as about 100 rival clergy and monks from the Greek Orthodox and Armenian Apostolic denominations attacked each other with broomsticks, fists and insults. The row is thought to have begun after a cleric from one sect accidentally pushed his broom into space 'controlled' by the other sect. The sixth-century site, believed to be Christ's birthplace, is jointly administered by the Latin, Orthodox and Armenian churches, with each fiercely guarding their turf against encroachment by the others. The fight ended only after Palestinian police, bending their heads to squeeze through the church's low 'door of humility', rushed in with batons to restore order. A police spokesman said: "No one was arrested because all those involved were men of God."



GETTY IMAGES / AFP / MUSA AL SHAER

They attacked each other with fists and broomsticks

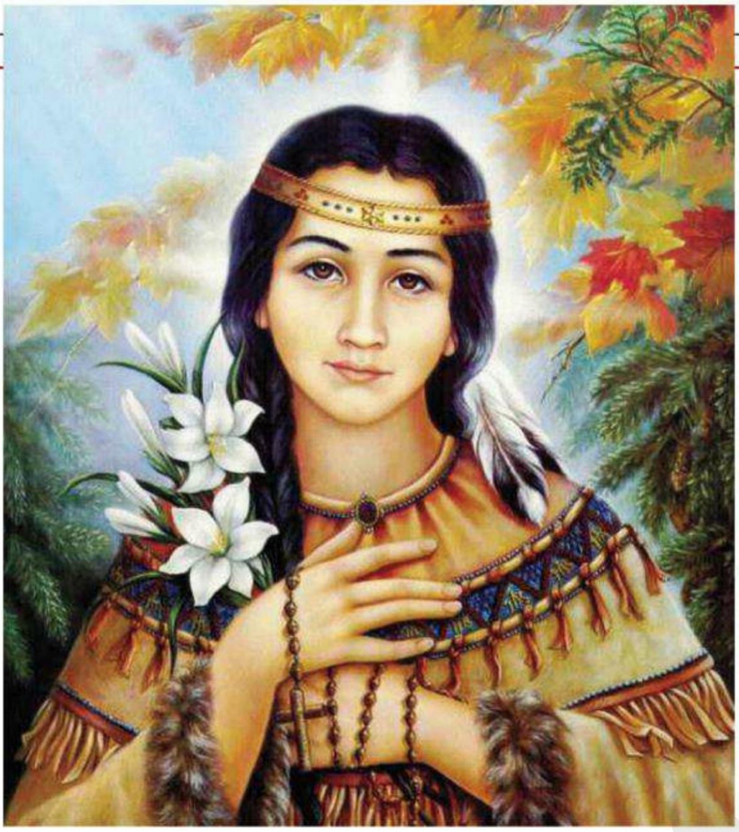
In the 1850s, tensions over the church were a factor in the outbreak of the Crimean War. Although the roof has needed work for decades and rainwater has ruined much of the artwork, renovation has been delayed by disagreements over who would foot the bill. Officials hope work will begin this year under a deal brokered by the Palestinian Authority. In the 1980s, monks battled each other with chains and broomsticks over who had the right to clean a particular section of wall and beams. At one point, a ladder was yanked out from under a cleric, who was working 16ft (5m) overhead. A fight over the dusting of chandeliers at Christmas 2006 landed several men in hospital after the Greek Orthodox contingent placed a ladder in Armenian territory.

Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre, built on the traditional site of the Crucifixion, has seen similar fights – for example in 2002, 2004, and April and November 2008 [**FT244:4–5**]. Besides the Greeks and Armenians, rival sects in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre include the Egyptian and Ethiopian Copts, Russian Orthodox, and Franciscans. *D.Mail, D.Telegraph, 29 Dec 2011.*

RELIC THEFT

At about 5pm on 11 October 2011, two masked raiders stole three relics of the 'True Cross' from Holy Cross Abbey in Thurles, Co. Tipperary, Ireland. One of the relics, authenticated by the Vatican as a piece of the cross used in Christ's crucifixion, was presented to the abbey in the late 12th century by Donal Mór O'Brien (1168–94), King of Thomond, while the other two were donated by St Peter's Basilica in Rome in 1977. (Bits of the True Cross always seemed to multiply magically.)

The 12th-century relic, a 12in (30cm) long piece of wood, was contained in a 14th-century silver monstrance (elaborate cross), while the other two pieces were in a cruciform container. They were locked in a steel-framed glass display cabinet, which the gang broke open with an angle-grinder. They drove off in a red Volkswagen Touareg, later found burnt out near Yellow Lough. Father Tom Breen, the parish priest of Holy Cross, said the local clergy and parishioners were "devastated". The theft, however, has boosted the number of visitors to the abbey. Three months later, on Candlemas (2 February), gardaí recovered the three relics "relatively unharmed" somewhere in the Irish midlands (no further details were given). Father Breen said the return of the relics "demonstrates the power of prayer". *Irish Times, 13+29 Oct 2011, 3 Feb 2012; (London) Times 13 Oct 2011.*



LILY OF THE MOHAWKS

The daughter of a 17th-century Mohawk chief, known as "Lily of the Mohawks" or "the Pocahontas of the Catholic Church", is to become the first indigenous North American saint. Kateri Tekakwitha was born in 1656 in Ossernenon, now the town of Auriesville in upstate New York. At the age of four, smallpox killed her parents and brother and left her half-blind and horribly disfigured. She was baptised by a French Jesuit in 1676, much to the fury of her tribe. She took the name Kateri, a Mohawk pronunciation of the French name Catherine, after Catherine of Siena. Tekakwitha means "one who puts things in order".

She went on to devote her life to prayer and caring for the sick and elderly. After her parents' death, she was cared for by her uncle, who was bitterly opposed to her faith and tried to marry her off, but she was not interested. She showed her religious devotion by sleeping on a mat of thorns or walking on hot coals. Fleeing persecution, she walked 200 miles (320km) north and joined a community of Native American Christians in Kahnawake, near Quebec. It was said that when she died in 1680, aged just 24, her smallpox scars vanished. Her tombstone bears the legend: "The fairest flower that ever bloomed among red men".

The process to make her a saint began in 1884. In 1943, Pope Pius XII declared her venerable, and in June 1980, after evidence of a miracle was discovered, she was beatified. Canonisation requires a second miracle and the Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints has now announced one has been found. Pope Benedict XVI has issued a decree saying that Tekakwitha will be among seven new saints to be canonised, with the ceremony expected to take place later this year, probably in May.

The second miracle involved the recovery of a six-year-old boy from a rare flesh-eating infection that nearly killed him. Jake Finkbonner from Washington State was playing basketball in 2006 when he cut his lip. The infection quickly developed and spread across his face and body. Doctors feared he would die and a priest was called in to administer the last rites; but his parents, who have Native American origins, did not give up hope. They arranged for a nun to place a bone fragment from Tekakwitha's wrist on their son's body. They put his recovery down to the intercession of Lily of the Mohawks, more than 330 years after her death. *D.Mail, D.Telegraph, 21 Dec 2011.*

KONSPIRACY KORNER

ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF LOBSTER MAGAZINE, REPORTS FROM THE BUNKER ON...

SURELY THE STRANGEST OBAMA CONSPIRACY THEORY YET

This might just be the oddest headline I have ever read: "Multiple Sources Claim They Saw Obama on the Surface of Mars in the Early 1980s".[1] And no, it's not an *Onion*-style joke: it's serious (at least in intent). We're in the wonderful world of exopolitics, defined by one of its practitioners as "an interdisciplinary scientific field, with its roots in the political sciences, that focuses on research, education and public policy with regard to the actors, institutions and processes, associated with extraterrestrial life".[2]

Just what we always wanted: an "interdisciplinary scientific field" in which there is not a single incontrovertible fact.

The "Obama on Mars" headline has arisen because two Americans have claimed that they – and the young Obama, then Barry Seotoro – were "part of the Mars training class" in 1980; this was as part of a US programme – in some accounts run by the CIA, in others by DARPA (the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) – which was teleporting US personnel to Mars via "a jump room". Fort would be proud.

And in case you were wondering, it has been reported that "White House officials have denied all allegations of the President's Martian travels, or the existence of a Mars training class."

As you follow this story through the Net, it gets odder and odder. Others have emerged to support the "Obama-on-Mars" claims. One is Laura Eisenhower, who claims to be the granddaughter of former US president Eisenhower, and describes herself as "cosmic mythologist, global alchemist, clairvoyant healer, Earth advocate, artist". One Michael Relf claims he spent 20 years on the US Mars facility as part of its security detail; and Arthur Neumann claims he teleported to Mars for meetings.[3]

At the centre of this bizarre tale is Andrew D Basiago, one of those claiming to have seen Obama *en route* to Mars in the early 1980s. In an earlier incarnation, as self-styled "President, Mars Anomaly Research Society", Basiago wrote a paper in 2008 called "The Discovery of Life on Mars" in which he displays and comments on pictures of Mars taken by NASA's Mars Exploration Rover in 2007.[4] In these photographs of rocks on the surface of Mars, Basiago sees people, artefacts and buildings.[5] Basiago concludes: "From this initial anthropological evidence provided by NASA, we can preliminarily conclude that the humanoid beings on Mars are sentient, possess a sense of humour and a love of laughter, cultivate the transcendental, spiritual side of life, and make decisions (or at least convene regularly) in some form of communitarian social organization."

In this article, Basiago forbears to mention that, 30 years previously, he had been teleported to Mars.

Writing about these claims, exopolitics advocate Alfred Lambremont Webre commented: "Their astonishing revelations provide a new dimension to the controversy surrounding President Obama's background and pose the possibility that it is an elaborate ruse to conceal Obama's participation as a young man in the US secret space programme."[6]

'Birthgate' as a cover for 'Marsgate'! Now that's what I *call* a conspiracy theory!

NOTES

[1] http://bit.ly/uKaAKb (alternet.org).

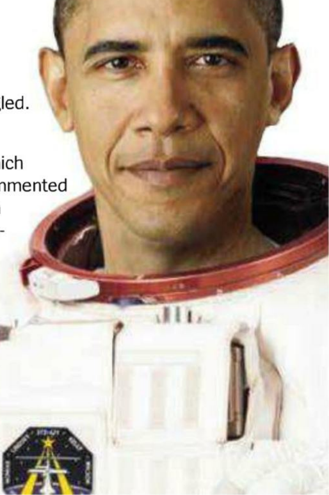
[2] http://bit.ly/yNF4yL (exocoza.lamiroy.com).

[3] Eisenhower, Relf and Neumann can be Googled.

[4] http://bit.ly/9cFyuh (exopolitics.blogs.com).

[5] In fairness, there is one very striking rock which resembles a human form – or, as one wag commented on the Net, which closely resembles the North American Bigfoot from the notorious Patterson-Gimlin film, specifically the famous image shown on the main Wikipedia page for Bigfoot.

[6] http://bit.ly/wOTMzZ (exopolitics.blogs.com).



HORSE-RIPPING

SENSELESS ATTACKS ON HORSES AND PONIES WERE QUICKLY BLAMED ON SATANIC RITUALS – WITH NO EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THIS.

BOTH PIX: SWNS

ABOVE LEFT: Owner Dawn Jewell with her prized stallion Eric. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The tragic view of the mutilated remains of Eric, a powerful two-year-old Friesian stallion.

On 5 January, a pony was found mutilated in Ciffig, Carmarthenshire, South Wales. Owner Linda Vickerage found Barney, seven, dead in his field, with his stomach slit open, eyes gouged out and genitalia removed. "It was done with almost surgical precision," she said.

Then in Stithians, near Falmouth in Cornwall, sometime between 4pm on Sunday, 8 January and midday the following day, a Friesian stallion called Eric was butchered to death, with an eye gouged out, teeth removed and genitalia cut off. A mare and foal in the same field were unharmed. "My first thought was he had been attacked by an animal," said owner Dawn Jewell, "but the vet said the wounds were caused by a knife." He was a powerful two-year-old animal, so his attackers must have used something to subdue him. Ms Jewell suspected he had been stunned with a Taser gun after finding two puncture wounds 3cm apart on his neck.

Following the news reports, Rosemary Penn, a competition horse breeder from nearby Bodmin, said she had a horse killed the same way during a full moon in January 2007. The three-year-old Shetland gelding was left to die with eyes gouged out and genitalia removed. The January full moon this year was on the morning of the 9th. On Saturday, 14 January, the mutilated body of a stallion was found in its field near Whatstone, Devon, in what appeared to be the third knife attack on a horse in less than a fortnight.

On the day after its first report, the *Sun* newspaper moved the Cornish attack to the evening of Saturday, 7 January, said to be "St Winebald's Day, a date in the satanic calendar traditionally celebrated with bloody rituals". This is utter bovine excrement – repeated by the BBC, which really should know better. The history of St Winebald's Day as a satanic holiday dates back 25 years to a completely bogus satanic calendar published in California by David Balsiger, an extreme right-wing Christian fundamentalist who runs Writeway Literary Associates. This was in 1987, just when the US Satanic Ritual Child Abuse scare was taking off.

The real St Winebald's Day falls on 18 December, not 7 January. Winebald, Winnibald or Wynbald (d. AD 761) was born in Wessex and was a missionary in Thuringia in Germany before becoming the first abbot of a monastery in Heidenheim founded by his brother Willibald, while his sister, Walburga, became abbess of the associated convent. St Walburga also makes an appearance in Balsiger's farrago of nonsense, but this time with the correct feast day – 25 February – also claimed to be an occasion of sacrifice and dismemberment. In the last 20 years, despite hundreds of allegations, there has not been a single case showing that satanists or witches mutilate or sacrifice animals.

Eric's eye was gouged out and genitalia removed

One of the common variants of the name Walburga is 'Walpurgis', as in Walpurgis Night, the Germanic name for May Eve (30 April), when witches were believed to meet at the Brocken, the highest peak in the Harz mountains of northern Germany. This story might well owe something to the Brocken Spectre, a giant shadow of the observer cast on clouds opposite the Sun, caused by refraction from banks of uniform water droplets [see **FT275:7**]. *Sun, 11+14 Jan; Metro, 12 Jan; D.Telegraph, 23 Jan 2012. www.saff.ukhq.co.uk; ministryoftruth.me.uk.*

A wave of horse mutilation occurred in Hampshire from 1988 to 1997, peaking with scores of cases in 1993. There were 27 arrests, but no one was charged. During the same period, equine mutilations also occurred across the country from Cornwall to Humberside, Kent to the Scottish Borders. One in four incidents seemed to be sexual in nature. [**FT66:12, 68:46–47, 94:22–28, 101:16**]. There was a further wave in 2002–03 [**FT171:32, 175:4–5**]. Clusters of horse ripping also occurred in the 1990s in Sweden [**FT64:18**] and in Germany [**FT132:8**]. A few cases make news every year. On 28 October 2010, a horse was found dead in Alfriston, East Sussex, with organs cut out, and last year two horses were left with horrific knife injuries in a field near Doncaster. *Sun, 29 Oct 2010, 17 June 2011.*

AZ ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the cryptozoological garden, including an appeal for the International Cryptozoology Museum, a spectacular sponge, and a shark witrh a big mouth.

ABOVE: Loren Coleman's museum is seeking funding. **BELOW:** The enormous marine Neptune's cup sponge.

J.W. OCKER

INTERNATIONAL CRYPTOZOOLOGY MUSEUM MOVES

It's not every day that the general public is treated to the sight of an 8ft (2.4m)-tall, 400lb (180kg) Bigfoot being carried down the high street, let alone a Feejee mermaid, a Naden Harbor Cadborosaurus, a pterodactyl, and many hundreds of other cryptozoological specimens, artefacts, and showcases. But this is what happened in Portland, Maine, on 23 October 2011, during the relocation from Congress Street to Avon Street of the International Cryptozoology Museum (ICM). Founded by veteran American cryptozoologist Loren Coleman, who serves as Director, it is the world's largest permanent exhibition devoted to mystery animals, and celebrated its official re-opening in its new, greatly expanded premises on 30 October.

Brimming with glass cases packed with fascinating crypto-memorabilia of every conceivable type, as well as larger display items such as the aforementioned Bigfoot figure (a life-sized sculpture of the famous Crookston Bigfoot) and a full-scale (5ft 6in / 1.7m-long) fibreglass cœlacanth replica, this unique collection attracted considerable interest from visitors and the media. Due to the sizeable cost of the move, in December 2011 the ICM, a strictly non-profit-making corporation of the State of Maine, launched a fundraising appeal to recoup at least some of it. If you would like to make a donation, please click the Donate button on the Cryptomundo website, or post a cheque/money order directly to the ICM at PO Box 4311, Portland, ME 04101, USA. Every little helps – especially when you have a Bigfoot, Caddy, and 3,000 other crypto-specimens to support! *www.cryptomundo.com 19 Sept, 24 Oct, & 7 Dec 2011*.

NEPTUNE'S CUP SPONGE

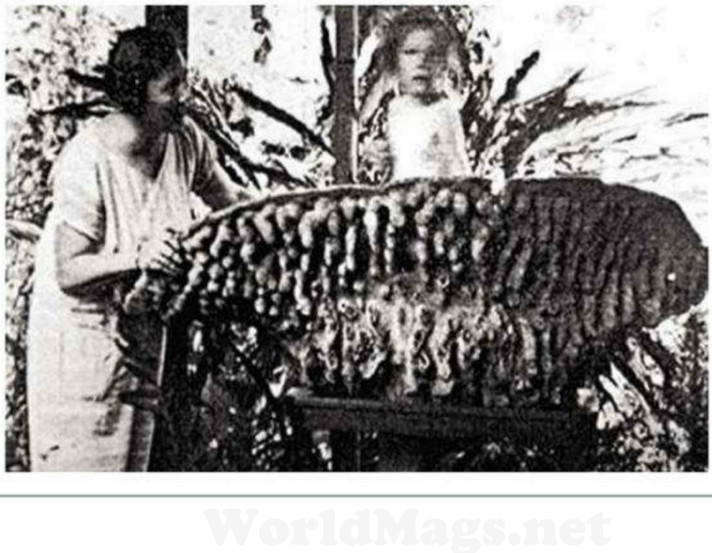
A cup-shaped sponge so large that it was traditionally used as a bath in which mothers bathed their small children is not readily overlooked. Yet this is what happened to a spectacular marine species known as Neptune's cup sponge (*Cliona patera*) for more than a century. Sometimes exceeding 3ft (90cm) in height and the same in diameter, it was once common in the seas around Indonesia, Australasia, and especially Singapore, but by the 1870s it had vanished off Singapore, and the last confirmed living specimens were recorded off western Java in 1908.

Although a few dead ones were found in Australian waters during the 1990s, no living specimens were reported anywhere – until March 2011. This was when a small living specimen was found near southern Singapore's St John's Island by biologists working with the environmental engineering firm DHI Water & Environment (S) Pte Ltd, followed by the discovery of a second one nearby. Their identification as *bona fide* juvenile individuals of *C.patera* was confirmed on-site by sponge expert Lim Swee Cheng, from the Tropical Marine Science Institute of the National University of Singapore. Searches are now planned for further specimens. http://bit.ly/s10iRH *(blogs.scientificamerican.com) 17 Nov 2011*.

MEGAMOUTH MYSTERY

Thirty-five years ago, in November 1976, a United States Navy research vessel sited off the Hawaiian island of Oahu made zoological headlines worldwide when it hauled up its anchor and found that a huge but hitherto-unknown species of shark with an enormous mouth was entangled in it. This was the first scientifically documented specimen of what became known as the megamouth *Megachasma pelagios* – on average, the world's sixth-largest shark species, and now known from just over 50 specimens reported in seas throughout the world. Many publications documenting this species refer to it as a classic cryptozoological discovery, but in reality it is nothing of the kind. According to the strict definition of a truly cryptozoological beast as stipulated by pioneering crypto-researcher Dr Bernard Heuvelmans, even prior to its formal scientific discovery such a creature has to have been familiar to the local people sharing or bordering its habitat (i.e. it has to have been *ethnoknown*). Conversely, the megamouth shark has always appeared to have been ethno-*un*known, i.e. unknown to scientists and locals alike prior to its unexpected debut at the end of an anchor in 1976.

However, the prospect of such a sizeable, highly distinctive creature, even one that inhabits the vast oceans, remaining entirely undetected until such a recent date as this has always seemed very implausible to me. Consequently, I was extremely interested to learn recently from cryptozoological enthusiast and chess champion H James Plaskett that while he was seeking giant octopuses off Bermuda in August 1999, shipwreck diver Teddy Tucker told him that the Chinese have been capturing megamouths in the Pacific since the 19th century. If Tucker's claim is true, it may well provide the first pre-1976 evidence for this species's existence on record. Moreover, as at least 12 post-1976 megamouth specimens have been recorded off Taiwan or close by, zoogeographically speaking it would certainly not be unprecedented. If anyone has additional or substantiating information, we'd love to hear from you. *H James Plaskett, pers. comm., 8 Dec 2011*.

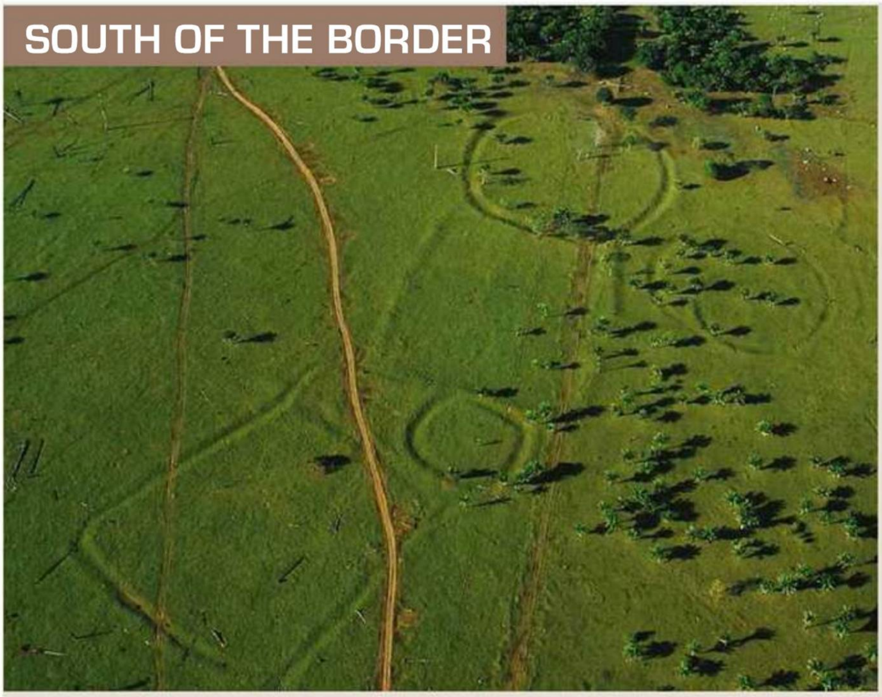


MATT PATTINSON

ARCHÆOLOGY

Our archæological round-up is brought to you by **PAUL DEVEREUX**, a founding co-editor of the peer-review *Time and Mind: The Journal of Archaeology, Consciousness and Culture* (www.bergpublishers.com).

SOUTH OF THE BORDER



DENISE SCHAAN

Intriguing earthworks in Acre, a state in the far western Brazilian Amazon, have been uncovered by a farmer clearing his land. They are earthen avenues half a metre (20in) deep and dating to between 1,000 and 2,000 years old. "What impressed me the most about these geoglyphs was their geometric precision," comments Brazilian palæontologist Alceu Ranzi, "and how they emerged from the forest we had all been taught was untouched except by a few nomadic tribes". To this, geographer William Woods, another member of the team researching the earthworks, adds: "If one wants to recreate pre-Columbian Amazonia, most of the forest needs to be removed, with many people and a managed, highly productive landscape replacing it. I know that this will not sit well with ardent environmentalists but what else can one say?"

This is indeed just the latest instance of stunningly precise earthworks forming avenues, plazas and large-scale geometric shapes to be found underlying various parts of the Amazonian rainforest, examples of which we have already reported on in this column [**FT260:20**]. Although well over 300 of these earthen features have so far been uncovered in the Amazon (most in Acre), researchers believe a great many more await discovery.

Perhaps the old confused rumours of there being a Lost City – an El Dorado – in the rainforest depths hark back to a dim memory of a vast, highly evolved ancient civilisation in the region. *New York Times, 14 Jan 2012*.

MIGHTY MEGALITH

A massive megalith has been unearthed near Cuautla, Morelos, Mexico, during foundation work for a shopping centre. Believed to date to the 8th century, it weighs 60 tons and is engraved with hieroglyphs and images, one of which is of a Mesoamerican goggle-eyed raingod type the later Aztecs called Tlaloc. The mighty rock had been placed facing the volcano of Popocatepetl, revered from ancient times as a water source (and even today torchlit pilgrimages are made by Indians up the volcano's slopes). *3news.co.nz, 11 July 2011*.

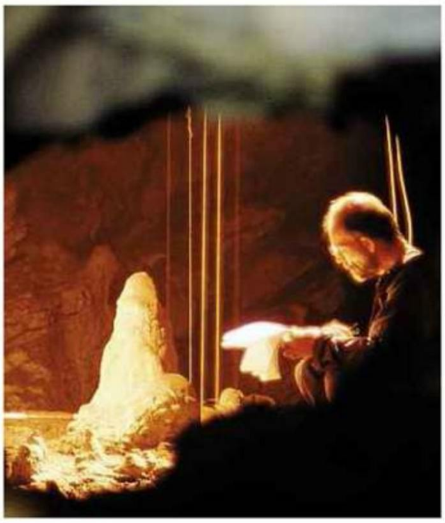
POPCORN CULTURE

Scientists from the Washington Natural History Museum have uncovered evidence on the northern coast of Peru for the earliest known cooked corn in South America. They found corncobs dating back to c. 4,700 BC that were used for making flour and popcorn. So now we know the ancient Peruvians had popcorn, will we next find their cinemas? *Science Daily, 18 Jan; BBC News, 19 Jan 2012*.

ASTROLOGY KIT IN A CAVE

Researchers Alexander Jones and Staso Forenbaher have reported on the exploration of a recess previously blocked by debris in the Nakovana Cave on the Adriatic coast of Croatia. They and colleagues uncovered 30 curious ivory fragments among other archæological material surrounding a distinctive phallic stalagmite. After a long period of painstaking restoration, it turns out that these 2,000-year-old fragments formed 12 arc-shaped pieces carved with signs of the zodiac in Greco-Roman style. They would have formed a complete zodiacal circle when laid out on a board. Coloured pebbles would probably have been placed by an astrologer to represent the positions of the Sun, Moon and planets on any given date in order to display a horoscope. It is thought to be the oldest find of its kind. It is not known if an astrologer would have worked in this clearly special, venerated cave, or whether the astrology board was simply deposited there. *Journal for the History of Astronomy 42:4, Nov 2011; Mail Online, 18 Jan 2012*.

STASO FORENBAHER



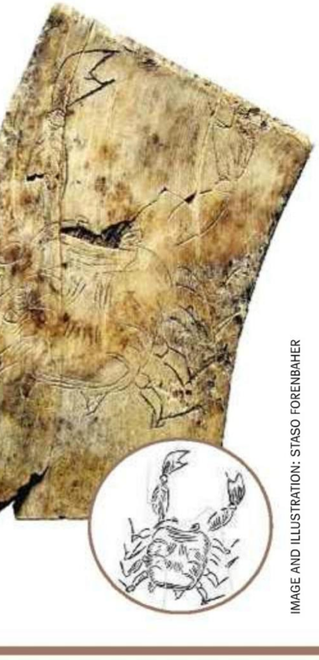


IMAGE AND ILLUSTRATION: STASO FORENBAHER

ABOVE: Peter Leach working by the distinctive phallic stalagmite in the Nakovava Cave.
RIGHT: The crab design from the zodiacal carvings.

SERPENT SURPRISE

As noted several times in this column, it is amazing what can lie around undiscovered for centuries. In this case, it is a serpent mound bigger and better preserved than the famed Great Serpent Mound (a Precolumbian serpentine earthwork in Adams County, Ohio). The newly discovered feature was spotted by eagle-eyed Ken Tankersley, an anthropology professor at the University of Cincinnati; it is situated alongside Miami Bluff Drive, Mariemont, Ohio, and near the edge of some woods. To most people it looks like a bit of rough, bumpy ground, with trees growing on it here and there, but Tankersley's investigations have shown it is in fact a serpent-shaped earthwork some 2,952ft (900m) long, over twice the length of the Great Serpent Mound, and ranging between 3–7ft (91–213cm) in height. It dates to AD 1400–1800, and was probably built by the Fort Ancient Indian group. The head of the earthen serpent points west, probably relating to Indian mythology referring to a serpent eating the Sun. *cincinnati.com, 1 Aug 2011.*

SECURITY SYSTEM

It is interesting how changes in culture affect what we feel we need to be protected from. Whereas today we use webcams, CCTV, and burglar alarms, in 12th-century Wales you'd be concerned to keep flying spirits, especially the spirits of witches, out of your property. During ongoing excavations at Nevern Castle, Pembrokeshire, Wales, archæologists uncovered 12 inscribed slates at the cut-stone entrance to the castle, one of the oldest in Wales. Because of what is known about the site, they can be confidently dated to AD 1170–1190. Lead archæologist Dr Chris Caple is reported as saying: "These inscribed slates are really interesting. They were found in only one place in the castle and were probably intended to ward off evil." Engravings from the mediæval period are, apparently, very rare, and these finds give an insight into the thinking of ordinary folk of the time. The markings are being closely examined and recorded. *Wales Online, 30 Sept 2011.*

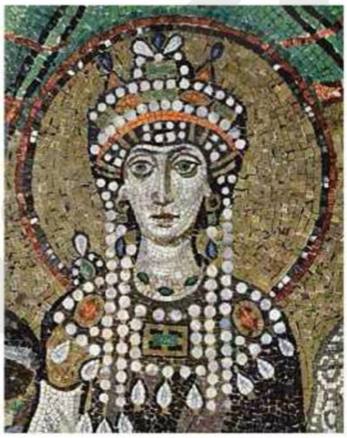
CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

148. SOME BYZANTINE BIZARRERIES

"Every gal in Constantinople
Is a Miss-stanbul, not Constantinople
So, if you've got a date in Constantinople
She'll be waiting in Istanbul" (The Four Lads)

Behind its facade of austere Christianity, Byzantium was a sex-fuelled culture, top-down. Very much on top was:



"The famous Theodora [below], whose strange elevation cannot be applauded as the triumph of female virtue… Her venal charms were abandoned to a promiscuous crowd of every rank and profession: the fortunate lover who had been promised a night of enjoyment was often driven from her bed by a stronger or more wealthy favourite; and when she passed through the streets, her presence was avoided by all who wished to escape either the scandal or the temptation. The satirical historian has not blushed to describe the naked scenes which Theodora was not ashamed to exhibit in the theatre. After exhausting the arts of sensual pleasure, she most ungratefully murmured against the parsimony of Nature; but her murmurs, her pleasures, and her arts, must be veiled in the obscurity of a learned language."

Edward Gibbon's phraseology (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch40) was calculated to inflame the prurient interest of his 18th-century readers. No English translation of Procopius (his "satirical historian") for them to stampede after; that had to wait until HB Dewing's Loeb (1935). Gibbon's final sentence has become famous, for the wrong reason. He was not advocating censorship. On the contrary, he was poking fun at the first printed edition of the *Secret History* (as it is now called – the Greek title is *Anekdota* = Unpublished Notes) by Alemannus (Lyons 1623), which omitted the chapter on Theodora's sex-capades. Ramming home his point, Gibbon printed the missing Greek, with Latin annotation, a further complaint that Maltretus's 1663 Paris edition was equally expurgatory, and the enticing claim that "a learned prelate, now deceased, was fond of quoting this passage in conversation" – sounds like a character in a Simon Raven novel.

Procopius's 'naming and shaming' of Theodora (*SH* bk9 paras17–25) is a lurid early example of tabloidese: "While still too young for proper intercourse, she served clients with anal desserts. At puberty, she immediately became an actress and tart, the kind our grandfathers called 'The Knee-Tremblers'. Devoid of shame, she loved to bare her all in public. Her sexual novelties attracted the most jaded of cocksmen, making the first move with dirty jokes and sexy wigglings. What she most liked was a dinner-orgy with a dozen lusty lads, whom she would shag senseless in turn, then take on their slaves, thirty or more, without ever getting enough. While servicing men via all three orifices, she would grumble at Mother Nature for not giving her nipples with holes big enough to be penetrated. Her special set piece was to lie on her back in public, have slaves sprinkle bird-seed over her genitals, and then trained geese would pluck them off one by one with their beaks and eat them."

The origin of our verb 'goose'? Sir Steven Runciman blamed Byzantine melancholy on Istanbul's climate, whereas Byron (*Don Juan*, Canto I, 63) opined: "What men call gallantry, and Gods adultery, / Is much more common where the climate's sultry." The anal item, also neutrally mentioned by her protégé and admirer, church historian John of Ephesus (*Lives*, *Patrologia Orientalis* 17, pp188–9), is nicely glossed by her royal husband Justinian's subsequent ban on buggery on the grounds that this activity causes earthquakes, a theological innovation grumbled against by Gore Vidal (*New Statesman*, 26 July 1992, p13).

From queenly quim to royal prick: "Every time that Heraclius (610–641) urinated, he had to lay a board across his stomach to prevent spurting into his face" (Nicephorus, *History*, bk7 ch11). Supposedly God's punishment for his incestuous marriage to niece Martina. Certainly the most arresting pre-Clinton case of penile servitude.

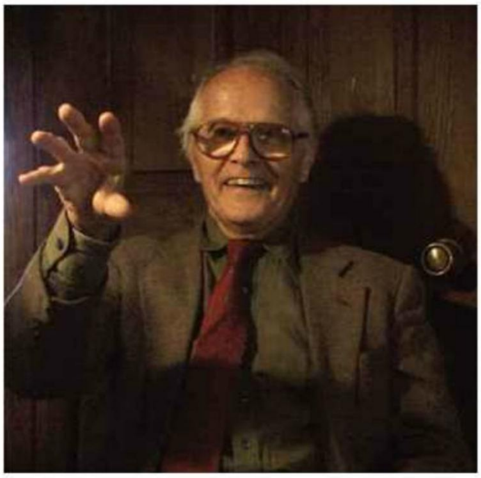
Zooerotic passions also ran high. The *Penitential*, a sermon by patriarch John IV Nesteutes ('The Faster', d. 595: Migne, *Patrologia Græca*, vol88 para1893D), condemns both sexes for having it off with beasts and birds. I suppose ornithomixy may be classier than sheep-shagging. But (I often ruminate), how was such congress achieved? Maybe ask a twitcher…?

"Birds do it, bees do it,
Even educated fleas do it…" (Cole Porter)

THE YORCK PROJECT, ZENODOT VERLAGSGESELLSCHAFT

NECROLOG

We note the passing of one of the world's leading experts on parapsychology and poltergeists, and a microbiologist who helped develop the Gaia hypothesis.



SUSAN MacWILLIAM *FL-A-M-M-A-R-I-O-N* 2009 VIDEO STILL FEATURING DR WILLIAM G ROLL

WILLIAM ROLL

Bill Roll was widely regarded as one of the world's leading parapsychologists. He was an expert on poltergeists and had written four books on the subject, as well as several hundred academic papers (many of them in collaboration with the field's most prominent scientists) and articles in a range of international periodicals. He also edited many volumes of *Research in Parapsychology*, the annual proceedings of the Parapsychological Association between 1976 and 1992.

William George Roll was born in 1926 in Bremen, Germany, where his father was American Vice-consul. When his parents divorced, he moved to Denmark with his Danish mother, Gudrun Agerholm Roll. In 1946, just after World War II – in which the teenaged Bill fought with the Danish resistance movement against the Germans – he went to live with his father in America.

Within a few years he studied philosophy, psychology and sociology. After gaining his degree, he went on to Oxford University where he spent eight years in parapsychology research under Professor HH Rice, and became President of the Oxford University Society for Psychical Research. In 1957, he was invited to join the famous parapsychologist JB Rhine at Duke University, North Carolina, where he worked for the next seven years. In 1961, he became Project Director of the Psychical Research Foundation (PRF), an offshoot of Rhine's Laboratory.

In 1964, Bill was elected President of the Parapsychological Association. He taught psychology and parapsychology in the Psychology Department of the University of West Georgia in Carrollton, Georgia, becoming Professor of Psychology and Psychical Research. All this experience he put into practice investigating ghost and poltergeist hauntings, building an impressive catalogue of cases. They were often regarded as models of procedure, during which he devised tests for theories as they emerged. He describes many of these cases in his books: *The Poltergeist* (1972), *Theory and Experiment in Psychical Research* (1975), and *Psychic Connections* (1995, with Lois Duncan).

After his retirement, Bill continued to teach the odd course but devoted himself to writing, speaking at conferences, and the occasional investigation. He was given the 'Distinguished Career in Parapsychology' award from the American Parapsychology Association in 1996; and in 2002, the 'Dinsdale Memorial Award' from the Society of Scientific Exploration for his research into 'poltergeist physics'. In recent years, he was noted for almost regular appearances on such US TV series as *Unsolved Mysteries* as the voice of reason.

Loyd Auerbach – an anthropologist, psychologist and entertainer with a professional interest in psychical phenomena – paid tribute to Roll as "the man who truly fleshed out the human agent model for poltergeists" and who was "one of our greatest field investigators". Roll concluded from a study of more than 100 well-documented poltergeist disturbances that there was a significant connection to human 'agents', often pubertal children or the ill. Building on the work of the pioneering parapsychologist Nandor Fodor (1895–1964), Roll proposed that agents suffering from some form of emotional stress were projecting an unknown psychokinetic force that precipitated sounds and movements of objects in the agent's environment, a process for which he coined the term "recurrent spontaneous psychokinesis" (RSPK). He observed this for himself in 1958 when he and JG Pratt (one of Rhine's associates), investigated a home in Seaford, Long Island, New York, in which the phenomena centred on the 12-year-old son of the affected family.

Bill again witnessed a poltergeist in action in his most famous case in 1984, when he led an investigation into the psychokinetic phenomena surrounding the troubled teenager Tina Resch, in Columbus, Ohio. The case is also known for the remarkable photographs showing 'objects in flight', taken by Fred Shannon of the *Columbus Dispatch*. But matters got worse as – 10 years later, aged 24 and on the receiving end of an abusive relationship – Tina was accused and convicted of killing her three-year-old child… a crime she consistently denies. As he revealed in the book *Unleashed: Of Poltergeists and Murder: The Curious Story of Tina Resch* (2004, with Valerie Storey) – and his article in **FT190:38–44** (Dec 2004) and online at http://bit.ly/Ary1wt (*Fortean Times*) – Roll was convinced of her innocence and helped her defence team whenever he could.

He believed that Tina's clashes with her harsh foster parents contributed both to the phenomena that occurred when she was 14 and to her passive acceptance of the later tragedy. He told *FT*: "I have been working on Tina's story for 20 years, and still I find much about her mysterious: her origins; the full extent of her abilities; and the circumstances surrounding the death of her child. But one thing is certain. For a time Tina had the power to directly affect the physical world. I am convinced that this power is still to be found in the depths of her mind."

Roll remained active in paranormal research right up until his death. Recently, he presented to the American Psychological Association an expansion of his RSPK theory to include references to quantum physics and neuroscience. He died just as the journal *Neurocase* posted the abstract for a new paper on which he was lead author. It presents the interesting case of a middle-aged woman who was plagued by classic phenomena after a head injury that left her with "a chronic electrical anomaly over the right temporo-insular region". Roll tells that a small pinwheel rotated while she 'concentrated' upon it and this correlated with "increased coherence between the left and right temporal lobes and concurrent activation of the left prefrontal region". At the same time, an increase in geomagnetic activity was detected and the woman reported "a marked feeling of 'sadness'".

The Resch case amply demonstrates one of Roll's greatest characteristics: he was able to conduct rigorous scientific investigations, yet was sincerely compassionate towards the victims of the disruptive phenomena and remained in contact with many of them for a long time afterwards. We might also add that Bill was much loved and admired by his friends and colleagues; indeed, he was always helpful when any writer or researcher approached him for help.

William George Roll, parapsychologist, born Bremen, Germany, 3 July 1926; died Georgia, USA, 9 Jan 2012, aged 85.

Bob Rickard

LYNN MARGULIS

This Professor of Botany at the University of Massachusetts was one of the most creative and respected researchers of her generation. She put forward a theory of *symbiogenesis*, which challenged the

Neo-Darwinian consensus by suggesting that inherited variation does not come – or does not come exclusively – from random genetic mutation but from long-standing interaction between organisms. For a decade before it became scientific orthodoxy, the scientific establishment treated her theory with scorn, while she branded the Neo-Darwinists as members of "a minor 20th-century religious sect within the sprawling religious persuasion of Anglo-Saxon Biology". Her book *Symbiosis in Cell Evolution* (1981) is now regarded as a 20th- century classic.

Born Lynn Alexander, aged 18 she married the astrophysicist Carl Sagan, with whom she had two children. She divorced him in 1963, saying while she had learned a great deal from him as a teenager, "in marriage I had nothing but hindrance from him". A second marriage, to Thomas Margulis, a chemist, also ended in divorce. In the mid-Seventies, she joined forces with the British atmospheric chemist James Lovelock, who suspected that living organisms had a greater effect on the atmosphere that was commonly recognised. Together they proposed a theory that the Earth itself – its atmosphere, the geology and the organisms that inhabit it – is a self-regulating system in which living organisms help to regulate the terrestrial and atmospheric conditions that make the planet habitable. In particular, they suggested that plankton act as a living thermostat, helping to regulate global temperature; that bogs and peat lands affect glaciers as the organisms within them release and absorb greenhouse gases; and that colonies of bacteria and other microbes in tidal mud flats process enough salt to help keep ocean salinity fairly constant. Lovelock said that the suggestion they call their hypothesis Gaia, after the Ancient Greek goddess of the Earth, came from writer William Golding, a neighbour. The concept fits perfectly with Charles Fort's idea of Continuity. However, while scientific opinion has come round to Margulis's theory of symbiogenesis, many scientists continue to regard the Gaia hypothesis as unconvincing – closer to philosophy than to falsifiable scientific theory.

Lynn Petra Alexander, afterwards Margolis, microbiologist, born Chicago 5 Mar 1938; died 22 Nov 2011, aged 73.

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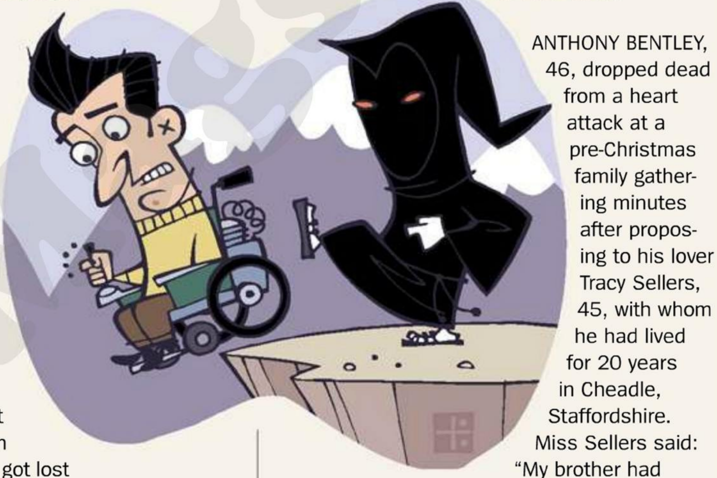
Strange deaths

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

TWO MEN WERE ARRESTED IN LATE DECEMBER in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh for allegedly killing a seven-year-old girl and cutting out her liver in a ritual sacrifice to ensure a better harvest. Lalita Tati disappeared in October and her dismembered remains were found a week later. The men – poor farmers described as "tribals", a term referring to the region's indigenous people – confessed to the crime and faced life sentences or execution. *Independent, 3 Jan 2012*.



TERRY COLON

ILLEGAL LOGGERS operating in an Amazon Indian reserve allegedly captured an eight-year-old girl and burned her alive. The child, who belonged to the isolated Gwaja-Awa tribe, was thought to have wandered from her village to play and got lost in the forest. The loggers, trespassing in the 1,000-acre (404ha) reserve in Maranhao state, northern Brazil, allegedly came across the young girl, tied her to a tree and set her on fire. Luis Carlos Guajajaras, an indigenous leader from another tribe in the reserve, said that members of his community saw the atrocity. He said the white loggers had been paying members of his tribe, the Guajajara, to let them pull down trees using heavy machinery and chains when the child appeared.

"They burned the child," he said, "just because they wanted to, out of nothing but pure wickedness. She was from another tribe. They live deep in the jungle and have no contact with the outside world. It would have been the first time she had ever seen white men. We heard they laughed as they burned her to death." The Indigenous Missionary Council confirmed reports of the murder, believed to have happened in October or November. The group claimed to have a video of the child's charred body. *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 10 Jan 2012*.

A WOMAN IN HER 60s CONVICTED OF practising magic and sorcery was beheaded by Saudi authorities on 12 December. Amina bint Abdul Halim bin Salem Nassar was executed in the northern province of Jawf. Abdullah al-Mohsen, chief of the religious police, said she had tricked people into thinking she could treat illnesses, charging £500 per session. The previous September, a Sudanese man was also beheaded for sorcery in Saudi Arabia [FT283:27]. *[AP] 13 Dec 2011*.

ANTHONY BENTLEY, 46, dropped dead from a heart attack at a pre-Christmas family gathering minutes after proposing to his lover Tracy Sellers, 45, with whom he had lived for 20 years in Cheadle, Staffordshire. Miss Sellers said: "My brother had been teasing him into making an honest woman out of me that night. He asked me to marry him and I said 'yes'. Then he just sat down and passed away." He left two daughters, aged 17 and 10. *Metro, 12 Jan 2012*.

A 32-YEAR-OLD MAN FELL 3,000ft (914m) TO his death after his electric wheelchair suddenly shot forward into a ravine near Trento, Italy. *Sun, 17 Aug 2011*.

A MAN WHO TRIED TO STEAL COPPER CABLES and a boiler from tunnels under a disused mental hospital in Cornwall died when he tried to tap power for his electric saw. Keith Greaves, 40, had gone with relative Neil Knight to service tunnels under St Lawrence's hospital in Bodmin on Easter Day 2011.

They were part through dismantling the copper tank when they ran out of power from the diesel generator for the electric jigsaw. Greaves, from Truro, tried to tap power from a 240-volt cable running through the tunnel using a "snap-on" connector. He was electrocuted and died at the scene. *Independent, 26 Nov 2011*.

the UFO files

FORTEAN TIMES presents our monthly section featuring regular sighting reports, reviews of classic cases, entries on major ufological topics and hands-on advice for UFO investigators. **The UFO Files** will benefit from your input, so don't hesitate to submit your suggestions and questions.

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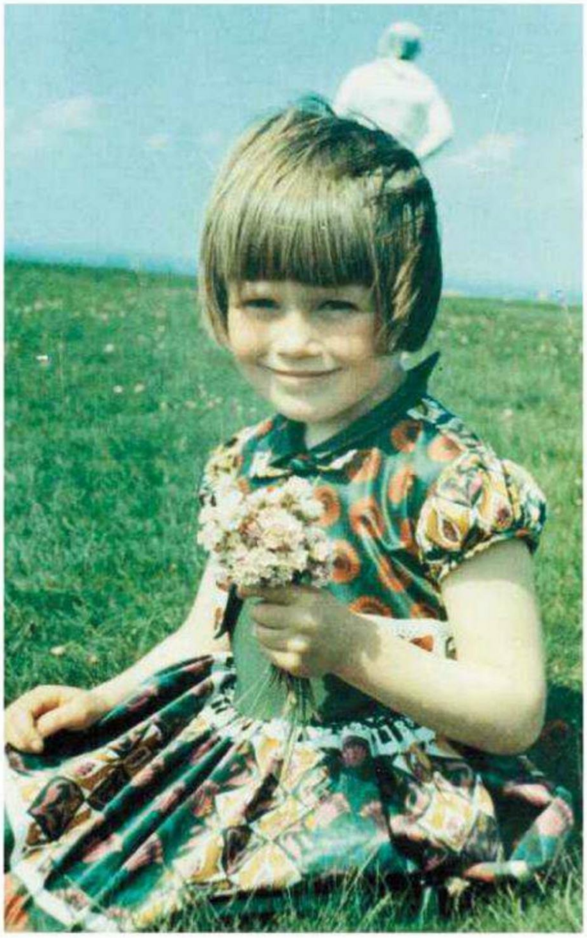
UFO CASE BOOK

ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE on a classic unexplained photo, following the death of the man who took it, Jim Templeton

FAREWELL TO THE SOLWAY SPACEMAN?

Jim Templeton died on 27 November 2011. His name will mean little to all but the most ardent students of British ufological history. But the photograph he took in 1964 will be familiar to most *FT* readers (see **FT196:29**) and has been reproduced numerous times on TV and in books and magazines over the past 48 years.

Although the photo depicts a strange space-suited entity rather than a UFO, it nevertheless remains one of the most puzzling images ever taken. Though the photo itself is often claimed to be a hoax, the circumstances that surround it are frequently used to argue for the existence of shadowy, Men In Black-like, government agents.



JIM TEMPLETON

Carlisle fireman Jim Templeton had a passion for photography, and on 24 May 1964 took a photograph of his eldest daughter on the Solway Marshes, the strip of land on the south side of the Solway Firth (Estuary), separating England from Scotland. When he collected the processed film, the shop assistant said, "That's a marvellous colour film, but who's the big fellow?" Jim was baffled until he took a closer look at the photographs. On one print, apparently standing just behind his daughter's head, was a large figure dressed in a 'spaceman' suit. Jim knew there had been no one else around at the time he took the photograph, and immediately had the negative tested by contacts in the police force and by the film's manufacturers, Kodak. Both said the image had not been tampered with and neither could account for what the *Cumberland News* began to call the 'Solway Spaceman'.

The photograph was soon on the front page of the local newspaper, and within days Jim and his daughter became media celebrities as the image was flashed round the world. But the price of this involuntary fame and attention was high. Jim's daughter was taunted and bullied and he had to take her out of school for a while because her nerves were suffering.

The Ministry of Defence showed no interest in the case until the *Cumberland News* contacted them for their opinion. The MoD said they would be pleased to analyse the photograph, but when Jim discovered they required the original film and camera for analysis he refused, and no official file exists to show they pursued the matter any further. Whether or not Jim was just being cautious in refusing to supply the original film and camera for analysis or whether he had good reason for not letting them out of his hands is a matter for speculation, especially in view of information that has arisen in recent years. A strange event then took place which has convinced many ufologists that the MoD were interested enough to covertly send a pair of secret agents to investigate the bizarre photograph.

Jim and his daughter soon became media celebrities

Later that summer, two men paid Jim a visit at the fire station. They were dressed entirely in black and drove a brand new black Jaguar car – unusual garb and transport for the times. They asked to be taken to the place where the photograph was taken. Jim queried their identity and was shown a card bearing an official crest and the word 'Security'. They told him, "We're from the Ministry, but you don't need to know who we are. We go by numbers." Jim noticed the pair referred to each other as 'Nine' and 'Eleven'. Their obvious lack of knowledge of the area and inability to pronounce local place names led Jim to conclude they weren't local people. Once they reached the marshes, Jim said the following conversation took place:

"'Pull up on here. This is where the photograph was taken.' They asked, 'Can you take us to the exact spot?' I said, 'Yes.' So we walked across, and I said, 'This is where the photograph was taken.' One looked at the other, and the other looked at him and said, 'This is where you saw the large man, the alien?' I said, 'No, we didn't see anybody… I never saw anybody.' 'Thank you very much,' he said, and he walked away.'"

In a somewhat bizarre conclusion to the encounter, the two men drove off, abandoning Jim to walk a mile (1.6km) to the nearest garage for a lift to Carlisle. Jim Templeton never saw the mysterious Men In Black again.

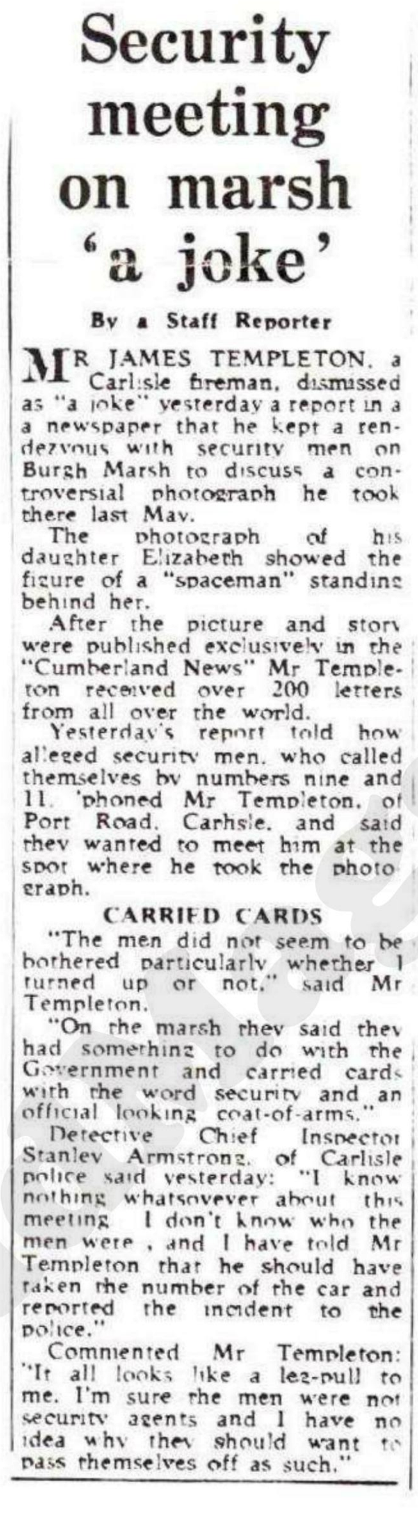
The case has become a *cause célèbre* in ufology, and has featured in a number of books and articles within the context of a Government cover-up. Analysis of the paper trail surrounding the case demonstrates how fact has become entangled with fantasy – with the result that another layer of confusion has been added to the MIB mythology. When the authors questioned Jim Templeton in 2001, he told us he firmly believed that the strange visitors were sent by the British Government; it was a statement he repeated to other writers and researchers in recent years. Jim's mysterious visitors have been tied in with all kinds of spurious events in an attempt to keep the idea of government MIB-type agents alive. For example, Jim's photograph has been linked to an anomalous 'figure' that was supposed to have appeared on a Blue Streak missile firing range at Woomera in South Australia. The link with the Solway Firth appeared to be that Blue Streak missiles were developed and tested at RAF Spadeadam in Cumbria. The missiles were part of a British vehicle designed to be used as the first stage of a satellite launcher. According to a Wikipedia entry, a Blue Streak launch at the Woomera range, using Cumbrian-built weaponry, had to be aborted the day after the Solway Spaceman photo was taken "because two large men [were] seen on the firing range… technicians at the time did not know about Templeton's sighting until it appeared on the front page of an Australian newspaper… and they said the figure in Cumbria looked the same as the ones they had seen on the monitor at Woomera."

Templeton repeated this story when interviewed by our own Jenny Randles for BBC2 documentary *Tales of the Paranormal* (1996). He said the Australian technicians had claimed the figures were "exactly the same type of man: same dress, same figure, same size as in the original photograph". The mystery appeared to deepen when, as part of the research for the programme, Jenny searched UFO files from 1964 held by The National Archives. There she found letters from members of the public referring to both the "Cumberland spaceman" and to a "mysterious object" captured on film during the rocket launch. But there was no trace of the can of film referred to in the archives. Had it been removed by the Men In Black?

The mystery also gripped MP James Fraser who, following the 1996 TV show, asked the MoD what had become of the 'missing' film. Files released by The National Archives in 2010 revealed that inquiries by the UFO desk discovered the film in question was neither secret nor 'missing' (DEFE 24/1983/1). It was, in fact, part of a British Pathé newsreel, and the original is held by the Imperial War Museum. Stills from the film were widely published by newspapers and the British magazine *Flying Saucer Review* shortly after its release. It shows a rocket test on 5 June 1964 and the 'mysterious object' visible in the sky beside the launch pad is clearly the result of a classic lens reflection. The film *Blue Streak – Two, One, Zero! 1964* can be viewed and copies purchased from the British Pathé website at: http://bit.ly/xYMGm2 (britishpathe.com).

As there was no other rocket test between 24 May and 5 June 1964, this footage must be the source of the 'spaceman' rumour spread by Jim Templeton. As Australian ufologist Bill Chalker concluded, "There would appear to be no links between the Solway photograph and the 5 June 1964 Woomera footage. Case solved."

No real evidence of any connection between these events, or indeed proof that a similar 'figure' was ever seen at Woomera, exists – though ufologists have never let UFO fact get in the way of UFO fiction. An air of mystery still pervades these claims, and the story of the Solway Spaceman has become a ufological legend. However, there is another, much more interesting, view of the story and one which, while it may not solve the case entirely, could, once and for all, cast reasonable doubt on Jim's claims that the photograph and his MIB story are genuine. Contemporary newspaper records from 1964 reveal that Jim Templeton took a very different view of the matter shortly after he had taken the infamous photograph. In September that year, his story of the MIB visit reached the national media and journalists asked the Carlisle police for confirmation that Jim has been quizzed by the security services.



Security meeting on marsh 'a joke'

By a Staff Reporter

MR JAMES TEMPLETON, a Carlisle fireman, dismissed as "a joke" yesterday a report in a a newspaper that he kept a rendezvous with security men on Burgh Marsh to discuss a controversial photograph he took there last May.

The photograph of his daughter Elizabeth showed the figure of a "spaceman" standing behind her.

After the picture and story were published exclusively in the "Cumberland News" Mr Templeton received over 200 letters from all over the world.

Yesterday's report told how alleged security men, who called themselves by numbers nine and 11, 'phoned Mr Templeton, of Port Road, Carlisle, and said they wanted to meet him at the spot where he took the photograph.

CARRIED CARDS

"The men did not seem to be bothered particularly whether I turned up or not," said Mr Templeton.

"On the marsh they said they had something to do with the Government and carried cards with the word security and an official looking coat-of-arms."

Detective Chief Inspector Stanley Armstrong, of Carlisle police said yesterday: "I know nothing whatsoever about this meeting. I don't know who the men were , and I have told Mr Templeton that he should have taken the number of the car and reported the incident to the police."

Commented Mr Templeton: "It all looks like a leg-pull to me. I'm sure the men were not security agents and I have no idea why they should want to pass themselves off as such."

Detective Chief Inspector Stanley Armstrong told the *Cumberland News*: "I know nothing whatsoever about this meeting. I don't know who the men were and I have told Mr Templeton that he should have taken the number of the car and reported the incident to the police." After the police became involved, Jim clearly wanted to play down the significance of the 'meeting.' He told the paper: "It all looks like a leg-pull to me. *I'm sure the men were not security agents and I have no idea why they should want to pass themselves off as such.*"

Jim Templeton was a very sincere man, but it seems that his interpretation of what took place on the lonely Solway Marshes in 1964 has, like so many elements of the UFO mystery, been coloured by what the media and UFO writers have wished to be the truth. In 1964, British ufology was in the doldrums. The great days of the 1950s saucer scares and contactees, when flying saucers made news headlines on a daily basis, were long gone and both flying saucer enthusiasts and media alike were looking for any story that would keep UFOs in the public eye. The Solway Spaceman photograph did just that, and paved the way for British ufology's great re-invention in 1966 when the so-called Warminster Phenomenon began.

That leaves the photograph itself. However the sceptics decry it as being a hoaxed photo, no one has actually been able to demonstrate how it might have been faked. A detailed photographic analysis carried out in 1997 by Roger Green of Bradford University concluded that the image was "…a composite made using some superimposition technique", but failed to demonstrate exactly how the composite might have been achieved. And of course Kodak's analysis claimed the photograph was genuine and had not been tampered with. Nor can we prove that Jim Templeton faked the photograph himself.

But there is evidence that he enjoyed playing practical jokes. For example, he told us that he had created a faked five pound note for amusement only weeks before the photograph was taken, to demonstrate his photographic skills. Templeton took the film for processing locally where, he said, "Everybody in the developing department knew me."

Perhaps, in trying to perfect his photographic techniques, Templeton did create the 'spaceman' photo; or perhaps, knowing of his liking for practical jokes and eager to play one on him, it is not inconceivable that someone in the processing labs tampered with the film to create the 'alien' image. Within days, the photo was world famous. That, coupled with the fact that Jim's daughter was upset because of all the attention she attracted, would make it impossible for Jim to confess to a hoax or for someone to say, "Sorry, Jim, it was just a joke". This is exactly what took place in other celebrated UFO photographic cases, where the instant fame achieved by the pranksters later prevented them from making a full confession and the stories became cemented as 'fact'. Subsequent retractions years later were either dismissed by the media and UFO researchers or fudged by the witnesses themselves to minimise embarrassment.

So who were Jim Templeton's mystery 'MIB' visitors? Former incumbent of the British government's UFO desk Nick Pope believes that there may be 'Walter Mitty' types among the civilian population who are prepared to impersonate MoD officials in order to speak to UFO witnesses for their own reasons. Evidence for such individuals is well documented in the MoD files.

And there, the story ends, for now. Jim is gone, but his story and photograph live on. The Solway Spaceman is an iconic image from a simpler time. A time when if you said you were from 'the ministry', people believed you and when the photograph of a 'spaceman' held untold potential for the human race. For some people, it still does.

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

37

HIGH STRANGENESS IN TEXAS

THEO PAIJMANS unearths a very strange sequence of events from the Lone Star State, involving lights in the sky, mysterious fireballs and a pair of ghostly entities.

At nine o'clock on the night of 4 October 1898, a brilliant object flew over several towns and villages in Texas. It was observed flying over Garland: "A meteor descending from a point near the sky's centre, travelling slowly in an easterly direction, suddenly changed its course and shot upwards, when it burst, throwing into the air three distinct bodies, each taking its own course. The first one was bright red, the second a white light and the third a bright blue. The red and blue lights soon died out, but the white one continued on its way a few seconds, when it burst, emitting a shower of stars which were extinguished almost immediately."[1]

It overflew Italy and Greenville at the same time, and was also seen at Blossom: "The largest and brightest meteor that was ever seen in this section... a ball of fire as large as a barrel." Local merchant Dick Moore, who was sitting on the pavement in front of his shop, commented that the light was "so glaring that he thought the house was falling on him. It lit up the whole heavens. Many saw the light, but few saw the meteor… One little fellow, Noble Hill, said that sparks flew in every direction."[2]

Another incident occurred the same night at approximately the same time. About two and a half miles (4km) north of Sherman and shortly after nine o'clock, 12-year-old George Campbell was riding with his father along the 'Eighty-foot road'. He told a reporter that "[A]ll at once everything got very bright. We saw a great ball of fire coming down toward the ground. It got within about three feet [90cm] of the ground and seemed to rest for a while and then it went back up until it got clear out of sight. There was a buzzing sound all the time." George estimated the fireball had a diameter of about 10ft (3m) and said, "[I]t hurt one's eyes to look at it. Although they were very close to it, he says that he did not feel any heat."[3]

> "We saw a great ball of fire coming down toward the ground… There was a buzzing sound all the time…"
> "I was standing in my kitchen… when the female ghost appeared to me…"

The evening before, a ball of fire had descended in the vicinity of the old Fort Washita, about 20 miles (30km) northwest of Denison. Mrs Willam Peveto recalled the incident five months later, so she might have misremembered the exact date. She described how at "About dusk on the evening of Oct. 3, a meteor fell not far from the old fort, and we saw it plainly from the house. It was a rare occurrence, and set me thinking, and after it fell a few minutes I was standing in my kitchen at household duties, when the female ghost appeared to me, and began talking curiously. I was in a thoughtful mood at the time, the falling of the ball of fire near us being the cause of my thought abstraction. I chatted a few moments with the woman, and my husband in the next room heard us talking. My visitor talked so queerly that in a few moments I looked up, and saw she was not of material flesh and blood. I was suddenly and terribly frightened and screamed, and the ghost fled through the closed door. One of the things the ghost told me was that if I would follow her she would take me to a fortune, but just at that time I didn't care particularly for a fortune, especially after a glance at my supernatural visitor."[4]

But the weirdness didn't stop there for Mrs Peveto. The entity visited her again and again, "telling me to look in the cellar of the house for a fortune and many like statements none of which I heeded. Her visits grew more and more frequent till the month of February, when they came nightly." On one such visit, the ghost told Mrs Peveto that she was a relative. The ghost insisted she follow her instructions, but Mrs Peveto refused. It seemed to her that the manifestation then "entered" the furniture in the house, promoting itself from badgering bedroom visitor to pesky poltergeist. Mrs Peveto made the best of it by entertaining house guests by "making a small table walk". One evening, the table made for the door, which was opened, and the piece of furniture moved toward the nearby ruins of the old fort, followed by Mrs Peveto and her friends. As they arrived near the fort, "A man suddenly appeared and told me a great many things about the place and the mysterious things that happened there… He had requested that my friends withdraw, and all of them but my dog went away. The dog gazed fixedly in the direction of the ghost with bristles standing, but did not growl or show further signs of offence at the meeting with the stranger. The man told me a great deal of what had already happened and foretold a great deal that would happen. He also referred to the hidden wealth around the house where I live, and for which I have always been afraid to search. He told me if I did not follow the female ghost, she would take my life. He told me further that I could talk to him any evening before dark if I desired. The man ghost warned me against the woman ghost and professed great friendship when he left."[5]

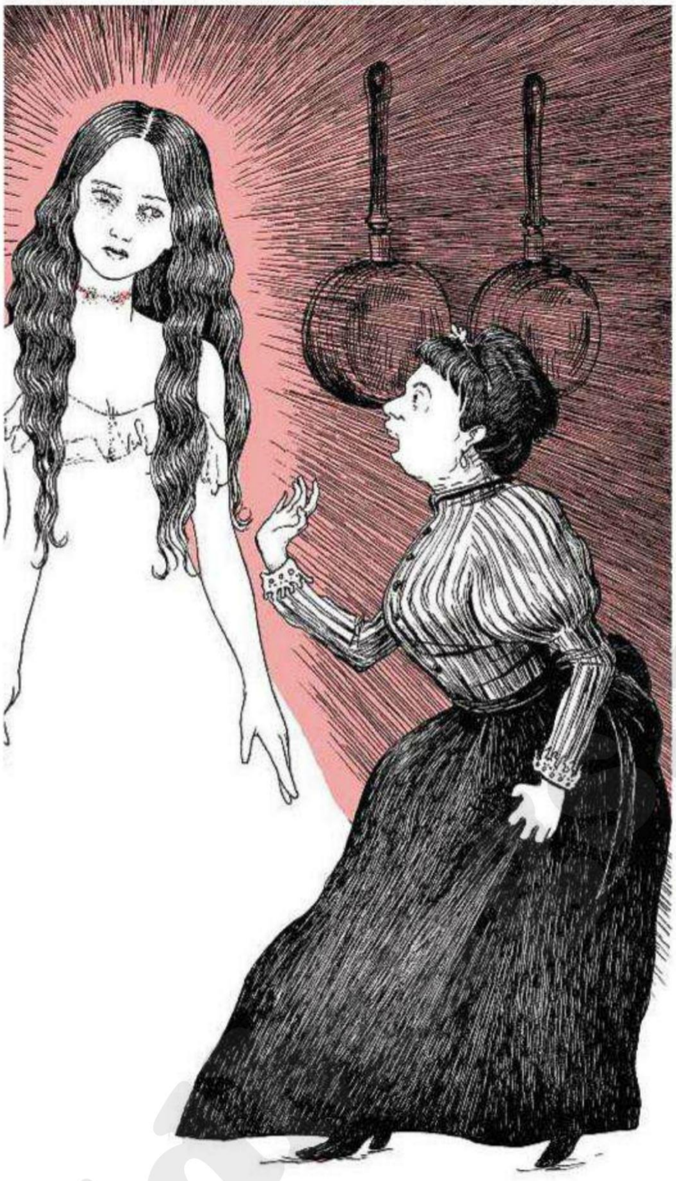
On another occasion, when she was showing the lively table to several neighbours and friends, Mrs Peveto was again confronted by the female apparition: "She came up close to me, drew a sword threateningly; I screamed and ran back to my friends. My husband and mother were with me at the time and the ghost asked that they leave us alone. I was afraid by myself. The man ghost has appeared several times since then, and told me if I would move 65 miles [105 km] away I would be rid of the ghostly visits I had been enduring for so long." This, she explained, was the reason for her moving to the small town of Sulphur Springs, but she promised to return in the middle of April. Further searches have yielded no accounts that she ever did return.

Her story had been published previously, on 20 October 1898 in the *Dallas Morning News*, and sheds some light on the approximate date of her first encounter: "About 10 days ago, Mrs Peveto, while at work in her kitchen, just after dusk, was accosted from behind by a woman. She was somewhat startled, knowing that there were no neighbouring women near, and she turned to look at the one addressing her. Mrs Peveto asserts that the woman was tall and stately with handsome and attractive features and a white robe-like dress now extinct in style. There was a certain unearthly and deathlike pallor about the features of the woman that gave Mrs Peveto a fright, but when in assuring tones the apparition began to talk and discuss the place, and what it had been like in years gone by, saying that she had visited there often, but had not been back for 20 years, Mrs Peveto grew more alarmed.” The ghost told her how she had been murdered in Fort Washita many years ago.

“To show that she had been murdered, she revealed the great, disfiguring black circle around her neck, showing that she had been strangled to death.” Mrs Peveto screamed, and her husband, who had heard her talking, rushed in the kitchen but only saw his wife. “The ghost had completely disappeared. Mrs Peveto is sure that she melted into thin air and went as she came, coming out of space and going the same way.”

After this weird visit, Mrs Peveto became very ill and at the time of the story’s appearance was said to be still recovering. “Many unearthly, strange and unusual noises have been heard about the place, but none of them attracted attention until the ghost herself put in an appearance,” commented the newspaper.[6]

Old Fort Washita, by the Washita River, indeed had a reputation for ghostly goings-on – weird sounds and noises from invisible agents, and sightings of a floating human head in the air. These traditions were apparently revived in Mrs Peveto’s experiences, and in one of these tales we find an indication as to the nature of her female ghost. The legend involved a young lieutenant who fell in love with a bandit woman, and their subsequent imprisonment at the fort. One morning, an officer went to see the lieutenant and instead found “the head severed from the trunk, staring out of the glassy eyes of death across a table on which it stood, and the body of the man was nowhere to be found. In one corner of the room was the dead body of the woman, a great black circle around her throat indicating the manner of her death. The head of the man and the dead body of the woman were buried in a solitary grave.”[7] This tale might have served as a template for Mrs Peveto’s experiences.



CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

On the other hand, elements of her own graphic descriptions might equally well have been grafted onto an earlier tale. It’s also possible that either she, the newspaper or both made the whole thing up; or that she did have a genuinely strange encounter at just the time that a fireball landed nearby and that these incidents were in some way connected. We have no way of telling now. Before the first account of her strange ordeal saw print, the local communities were very much aware of her story: “There is a great deal of talk in the Territory about the place, and a revival of many old ghost stories that were in circulation a few years ago.” Owing to the publication of Mrs Peveto’s experiences, hundreds of people began to visit the old fort.

But note that in the earlier account of Mrs Peveto’s experiences, there is no mention of the fireball landing at the old fort.

When the incident was mentioned in her second account, published five months later, the newspaper also reported that the night before at about 9 o’clock at Pottsboro, Texas, “a brilliant meteor, of unusual magnitude and brilliancy, was seen…” It went in a northerly direction until it burst. “The light was so intense that, notwithstanding the fact that the Moon was shining brightly, it completely dissipated the shadows.”[8] Other sightings from around Texas were reported. Around mid-February. Physician James R Edwards of Denton was making an early morning drive to see a patient north of that town and, with another witness, saw how “an immense meteorite fell almost directly in front of them. The whole heavens were lighted so brightly, Dr Edwards says, he could have spotted a pin lying on the ground. Making a swishing sound, the meteor was large and round.” Suddenly, they heard a muffled explosion and they could smell the sulphurous fumes. “In the explosion one large blazing segment of the meteor was sent off in a southerly direction and seemed to travel about 15ft [4.6m] parallel to the ground.”[9]

Mrs Peveto stated that she would move to the small town of Sulphur Springs, but we hear no more of her. So ends a sequence of puzzling events. Brilliantly lit objects cavorted through the night sky and a humming, fiery globe landed and took off again in front of startled eyewitnesses. A fireball descended and was followed by a close encounter with a humanoid entity nearby. It enticed the witness to follow it, echoing the abduction motifs in fairy- and UFO-lore. Mrs Peveto was nightly visited by the female apparition, paranormal events began to plague her home with poltergeist-like effects and she had repeated encounters with another manifestation that foretold the future. Taking the fireball sightings and the paranormal manifestations around Mrs Peveto together, the events resemble in detail the descriptions of the ‘high strangeness’ cases of the 20th-century UFO phenomenon.

NOTES

[1] “Aerial Phenomena In Texas”, *Dallas Morning News*, Dallas, Texas, 5 Oct 1898. Also in the *Galveston Daily News*, Galveston, Texas, 6 Oct 1898.

[2] “The Meteor”, *Dallas Morning News*, Dallas, 7 Oct 1898.

[3] *Dallas Morning News* & *Galveston Daily News*, *op.cit*. The town of Sherman had its own newspaper, the *Sherman Daily Register*, which ran from 1885 to 1906. In the Index of the *Sherman Register* compiled in 1934, on p7 the following entry is found: “Campbell, Geo. Relates unusual story of seeing great ball of fire, 10-4-1898, p4, col.5.” Seen here: http://bit.ly/w1LTH0 (txgenweb3.org). Unfortunately, only a few editions of the *Sherman Daily Register* for the year 1887 are at this time digitised and accessible online at the University of North Texas: http://bit.ly/y7F0a9 (texashistory.unt.edu).

[4] “Old Fort Washita Ghosts. Mrs Peveto Contributes Another Uncanny Chapter To The Record.” *Dallas Morning News*, 26 Mar 1899.

[5] *Ibid*.

[6] “Ghosts At Old Fort Washita”, *Dallas Morning News*, 20 Oct 1898. The account is dated: Denison, Tex., 17 Oct.

[7] *Ibid*.

[8] “Brilliant Meteor Witnessed”, *Dallas Morning News*, 26 Mar 1899.

[9] “Fall Of A Meteorite. Witnessed by a Physician Near Denton, Texas”, *Galveston Daily News*, 20 Feb 1899.

A SHORT HISTORY OF DOG-HEADED MEN

MATT SALUSBURY traces the perplexing presence of the cynocephali – or dog-headed men – from 4,000-year-old Libyan rock art to mediæval maps, and from canine saints to modern tales of alien contact. Why have these strange half-human creatures enjoyed such a long life, and what could they possibly be? Main illustration by **CHRIS SMITH**.

In the deserts of Western Libya, on cliffs and boulders along the edge of a dry riverbed called Wadi Mattendush, are rock carvings created by a culture making the jump from hunter-gathering to nomadic pastoral farming around 4,000 years ago. Possibly re-cut many times, their carvings show animals in a land before the Sahara arrived – giraffes and elephants are accurately depicted. One carving shows two dog-headed men dragging away the body of a rhino, or possibly using magic to control it.

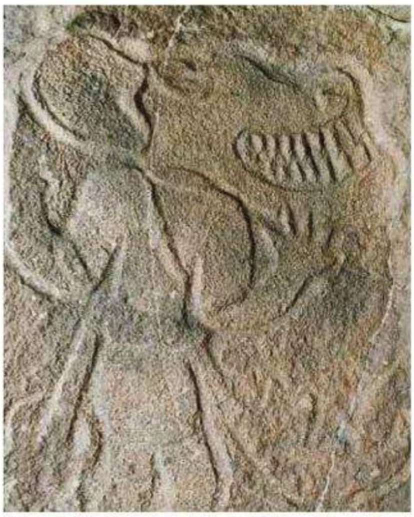
Wadi Mattendush is just one rock-carving site featuring dog-headed men scattered around Libya's Messak ("plateau") region. David Coulson of the Trust for African Rock Art says these dog-headed figures are "quite common" at five different sites around Messak and just over the Algerian border at Tassili n Ajjer. One shows a dog-headed human carrying a club, with a dog-headed baby at his feet. Another Messak dog-head is carrying away an aurochs, the wild ancestor of our domestic cattle, on its shoulders.

Archæologist Tertia Barnett says of Libya's dog-headed carvings: "We still don't know much about the people who created them." It's even unclear whether the dog-headed men depicted are just humans wearing masks – Messak also depicts elephant-headed humans, one of whom is revealed as a human removing a mask.[1]

Since this earliest known appearance, dog-headed men have remained with us constantly, appearing as illustrations on world maps well into the 16th century, and in many of the mediæval world's most widely read books.

While some came to imagine dog-headed cohorts among the armies of the Antichrist, there were also dog-headed Christian saints. The dog-headed races – or *cynocephali* to use their Greek name – were the subject of debate by Christian theologians from St Augustine onwards.[2] Dog-headed men get a mention in some of the oldest Arthurian poetry and in the (mythical) deeds of Alexander the Great. Conquistadors expected to encounter them in the New World, and the word 'cannibal' may have come from the man-eating cynocephalic peoples.

THE DOG-HEADED RACES WERE THE SUBJECT OF DEBATE BY THEOLOGIANS



ABOVE: A dog-headed figure from Libya's Messak.

RUDIGER & GABRIELE LUTZ

Dog-headed men are now regarded as the stuff of folklore or the product of misidentification. But this hasn't prevented clusters of sightings from modern times of dog-headed entities that shouldn't exist but are nonetheless reported. And within the rich modern mythos of ufology there's a sub-genre of impossible close encounters with extraterrestrial 'dog-like' humanoids.

CLASSICAL CYNOCEPHALI

The ancient Egyptians bequeathed a mini-pantheon of cynocephalic deities; the best known being the canine-headed god Anubis (*aka* Anpu).[3] There was also the jackal-headed Duamutef, protector of the stomach, whose head is found on canoptic jars protecting organs removed on mummification. Anubis was often depicted as a warrior, as was the more ancient jackal/wolf-headed Upuaut ('he who opens the way'), who featured in battle standards in the earliest armies of ancient Egypt and who shared many honorific titles with Anubis. Anubis was imported into the Roman Empire, and merged with aspects of Roman gods. In Persian miniatures and some mediæval illustrations, dog-headed men are depicted – like Anubis – as black-skinned and wearing loincloths. Furthermore, the early Eastern Orthodox dog-headed version of St Christopher seems to have come out of Christian Egypt.

Dog-headed men re-emerged as 'cynocephali' in the Classical world. Probably the oldest known source for Classical cynocephali is Herodotus, writing between 450 and 420 BC. He located dog-headed men in Libya, home of the Messak dog-head carvings. His *Histories* states (4.191): "For the eastern side of Libya, where the wanderers dwell, is low and sandy, as far as the river Triton; but westward of that the land of the husbandmen is very hilly, and abounds with forests and wild beasts… Here too are the dog-faced creatures, and the creatures without heads, whom the Libyans declare to have their eyes in their breasts."

It was Herodotus who first associated the dog-headed men with headless men (*acephali*) and cyclopses. Henceforth they were frequently lumped together, sometimes assumed to be one and the same.

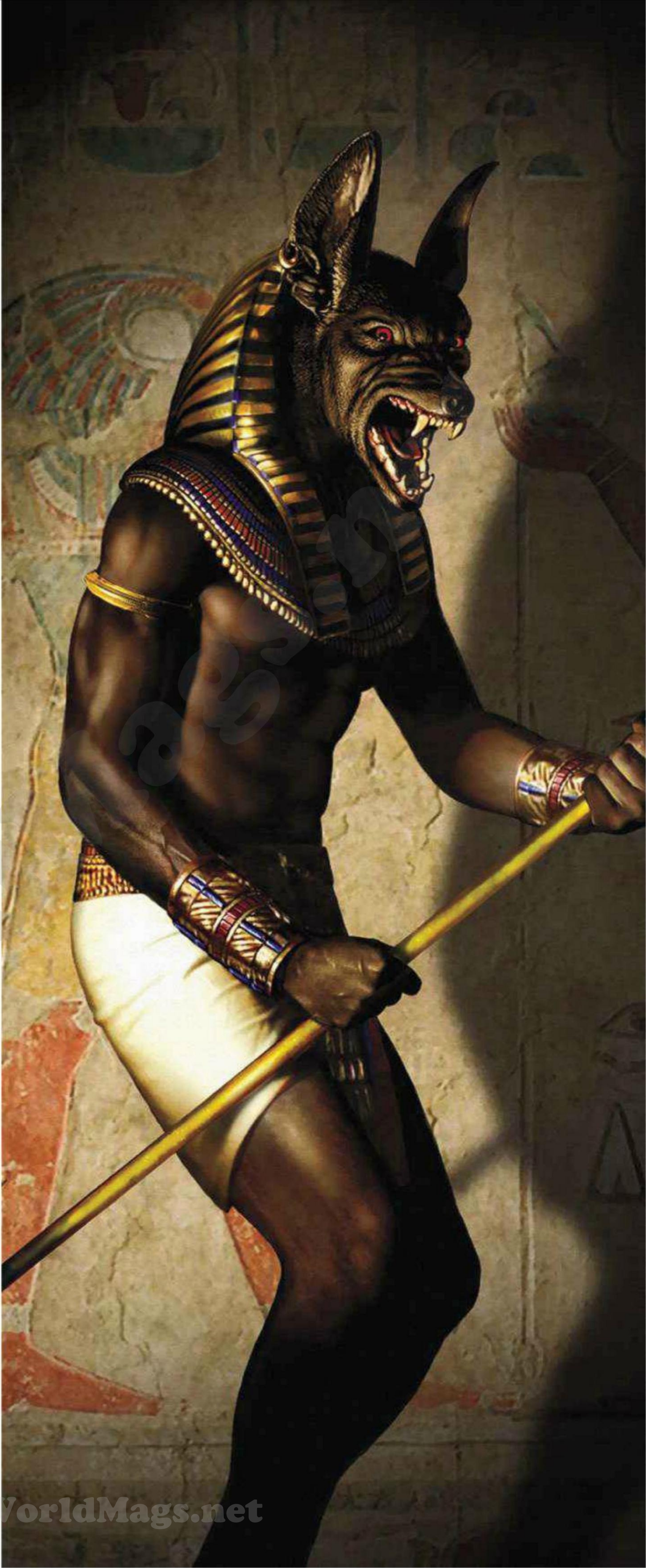
Then came Ctesias of Cnidus, a Greek doctor at the court of the king of Persia in the last years of the 4th century BC. His works – including probably the earliest travelogue of India – are lost, but are quoted extensively by others. Byzantine scholar Photius plagiarises Ctesias in his eighth-century AD *Indica*: "On these mountains there live men with the head of a dog, whose clothing is the skin of wild beasts. They speak no language, but bark like dogs, and in this manner make themselves understood by each other. Their teeth are larger than those of dogs, their nails like those of these animals, but longer and rounder. They inhabit the mountains as far as the river Indus. Their complexion is swarthy. They are extremely just, like the rest of the Indians with whom they associate. They understand the Indian language but are unable to converse, only barking or making signs with their hands and fingers by way of reply, like the deaf and dumb. They are called by the Indians *Calystrii*, in Greek *Cynocephali*. They live on raw meat. They number about 120,000." (*Indica*, chapter 72)

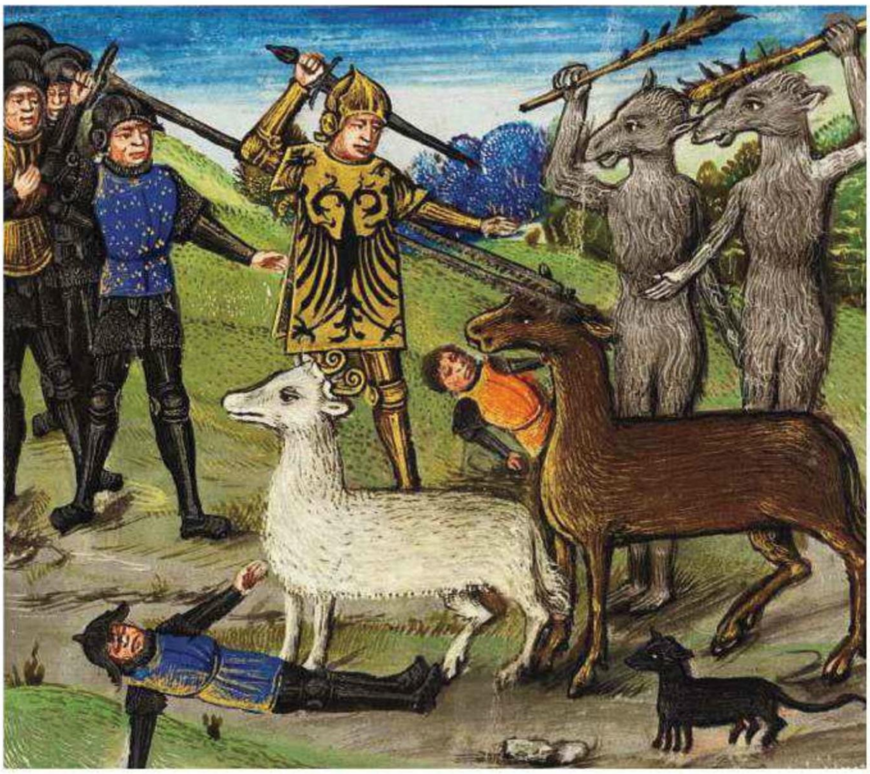
Claudius Aelianus, a philosopher writing sometime between AD 175 and 235, described the dog-headed men of India in his *On the Nature of Animals* as "honest and harmless creatures" who "are righteous and harm no one". They eat the raw, sun-dried "flesh of wild beasts", but also raise sheep and goats.

C. Plinius Secundus (Pliny) in his *Natural Histories*, appearing around AD 79, has a description of dog-headed men almost identical to Ctesias. Pliny says (book 7, ch.20) they are "with heads like dogs" and "sharp and trenchant nails… They live on prey which they get by chasing wild beasts and fowling." Unlike Ctesias, Pliny places dog-headed men in Ethiopia. The land of the Ethiopians, (literally any "people with burnt skin") and India were to the Greeks all part of the same vast and impossibly exotic region.

MEDIÆVAL MAPS AND MONSTERS

Believed to be the most translated and one of the most widely circulated works of mediæval literature in its numerous manuscript versions, the *Romance of Alexander* was regarded as historical throughout the Middle Ages. It featured dog-headed men as warlike man-eating giants, who appear in the book's list of up to 24 "unclean races", which also came to include the Amazons, the Biblical peoples of Gog and Magog





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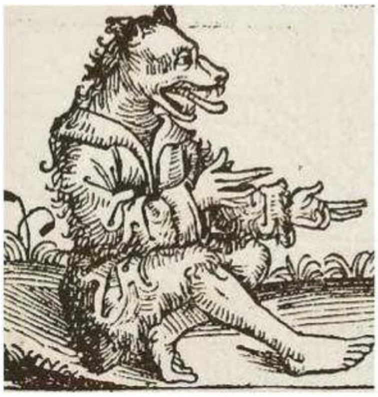


ABOVE: Alexander fights the cynocephali in *The Battles of Alexander*, a late 15th-century manuscript. **TOP RIGHT:** A dog-headed man from Hartmann Schedel's *Nuremberg Chronicle* of 1493. **ABOVE RIGHT:** A dog-headed man appears to dance with a monkey in South America on the 1513 Piri Reis map.

ALEXANDER FOUGHT A PITCHED BATTLE WITH A 40,000 STRONG DOG-HEADED ARMY

and the "people who eat moles and mice".

As if the real deeds of the historical Alexander the Great weren't spectacular enough, one version of *Romance* has him capture numerous dog-headed cannibals following a pitched battle with a 40,000-strong dog-headed army, which "barked wildly" and fled when Alexander set the surrounding scrubland on fire. The *Romance* ends with Alexander "walling up" the remaining dog-headed men along with the other unclean races beyond the mountain peaks of the Caucasus at the edge of the Earth. Here they were said to lie in wait, poised to sweep across Christendom in the armies of the Antichrist. In later versions, dog-headed men came to resemble Turks, Mongols or whoever posed the latest threat from the East. Franciscan Monk Juan de Pian de Cipriano even reported seeing dog-headed men on a visit to the court of the Mongol "Great Khan" in 1246.

In 13th-century Wales, all manner of legends were attaching themselves to the name of King Arthur, whose heroic followers were being named for the first time. The contemporary Welsh language poem *Pa Gur* ("What man?"), from the Black Book of Carmarthen, may be based on much earlier sources, and introduces the Arthurian knight Sir Kei. Kei's epic deeds are listed: he "slaughtered adversaries three at a time, killed a witch in the hall at Awarnach… He killed *Cinbin* ('*dog-heads*') at Minit Eiden" (Edinburgh). "Dog-heads" could have been a derogatory term for a local ethnic group or band of outlaws.

St Isadore of Seville's *Etymologies* (some time around AD 636) attempted to merge Classical learning with a Christian allegorical tradition. The *Etymologies* section "On human monstrosities" says: "The Cynocephali are so-called because they have dogs' heads and their very barking betrays them as beasts rather than men." Works like the *Etymologies* led to the bestiaries and allegorical maps of the world, always with Jerusalem or the Garden of Eden at the centre. Naturally, the usual repertoire of dog-headed men, cannibals, headless men, huge-eared humans and so forth found their way onto these maps.

In mediæval maps like the fragmentary Duchy of Cornwall Map and the Hereford Mappa Mundi (where dog-headed men are labelled 'Gigantes') they were normally slotted in along with the cyclopses and *acephali* in panels in East Africa – the furthest landmass in mediæval cosmology from the Garden of Eden and therefore the furthest from God. Among the hierarchy of the blessed and the damned, dog-headed men were somewhere between beasts and men, creatures created along with humans on the sixth day of creation, but not quite human.

Some dog-headed men – as in the tiny 1265 Westminster Psalter World Map – are shown chewing on severed human limbs. The Westmuller World Map of 1492 has dog-headed men in a side panel, and the Ottoman Turkish 1513 vintage Piri Reis Map of the World puts dog-headed men in the recently discovered South America, along with men with no heads. Long after it became obvious the New World contained no such creatures, Pierre Descelier's world map of 1550 depicted dog-headed men in an elaborate human sacrifice scene in a vague southern supercontinent of "Australle".

DOG-HEADED SAINTS

Dog-headed men turn up in Christian devotional art throughout mediæval European art, found among choruses praising the Lord, among the "nations of the world" receiving the Gospel in representations of the Pentecost, bringing Christianity to the corners of the world, or ascended to Heaven.

Around AD 825, Frankish theologian Ratharamnus wrote his *Epistola de Cynocephalis* to his fellow monk Rimbert, in response to his query about "what you should believe about the Cynocephali". Ratharamnus concludes that the apparent capacity of the "dog-heads" to make laws, practise agriculture and "cover the privates" is evidence that they are the are "sons of Adam" and rational beings with minds and souls, capable of salvation.[4]

The monks at the Greek Orthodox monastery complex at Mount Athos are said to be reluctant to show to visitors their St Christopher dog's tooth relic, and one fresco of a fully human St Christopher at Mount Athos appears to have been painted over an earlier dog-headed version. It seems the current Western Christian version of St Christopher, as a child-carrying human giant, arose in the 12th century and over the next 200 years pushed out the prevailing dog-headed version of the saint. Walter Loeschke's 1965 study of a "*Tieköpgigen Christophoros*" found

70 examples of dog-headed St Christophers in Christian iconography from Russia to Ireland.

The earliest known dog-headed St Christopher reference was the fourth-century Coptic Egyptian *Acts of St Andrew and St Bartholomew among the Parthians*, in which the saints convert a dog-headed cannibal ogre, Christianus, who joins them in missionary work in Parthia. In the Ethiopian version, St Christopher is the only dog-head among a City of Cannibals to which Bartholomew and Andrew are magically transported. Often Christopher is given that name (and the power of speech) on his conversion, and has the name "Reprobus" (Abominable) before his conversion. Christopher first appears in his own right in eighth-century Spain. In another version of the legend, Reprobus is a handsome youth who is "granted" an ugly dog's head after praying for a way to avoid the temptations of the flesh.

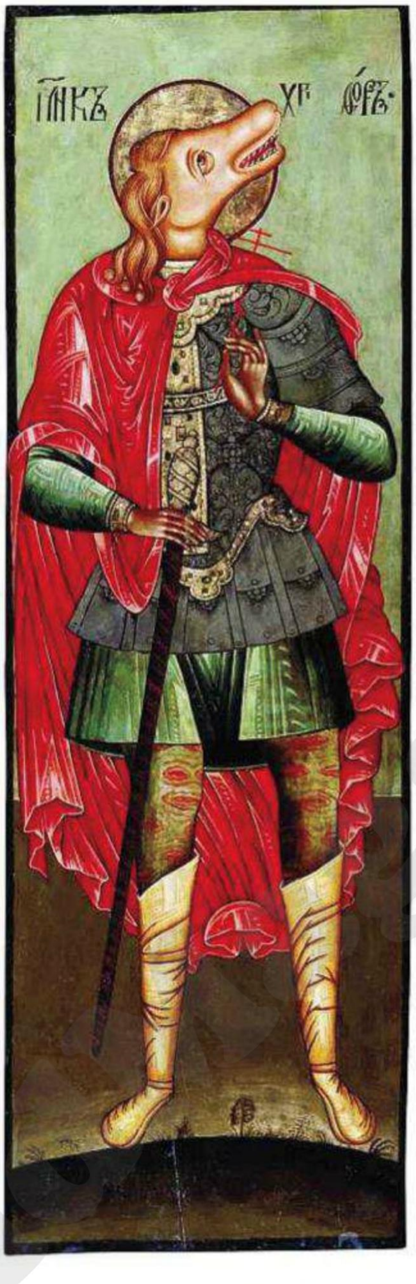
Nor was St Christopher the only dog-headed saint. The Syrian Coptic St Mercurius – like St Christopher, martyred by the Roman Emperor Decius – has two faithful dog-headed retainers who were converts to Christianity. Mercurius and Christopher were often depicted as warrior saints standing to attention, not unlike the soldierly Anubis. In parts of Austria, on St Thomas's Night, St Thomas is said to appear in the form of a barking dog-headed man.

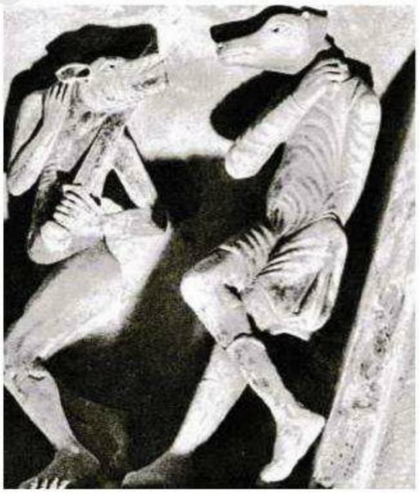
TRAVELLERS' TALES

Dog-headed men eventually began to feature in secular travelogues. Published around 1300 as *Description of the World* (aka *Book of the World's Marvels*), the travelogue of Marco Polo said of an unnamed island in "The Indies" that "all the men of this island have heads like dogs, and teeth and eyes like dogs; for I assure you that the whole aspect of their faces is that of big mastiffs. They are a very cruel race: whenever they can get hold of a man who is not one of their kind, they devour him." Odorico de Pordenone reported in 1327 that dog-headed men dwelt in the "Nicuneman Islands" (1327), although neither author claimed to have actually seen them.

English author John Mandeville's pre-printing "bestseller" *The Travels* (1357–1371) had accurate, first-hand information on sites in the Holy Land, but also included descriptions of "folk of diverse shape and marvellously disfigured", among them the dog-headed men of 'the island of Nacumeran' (the Nicobar Islands of the Indian Ocean?) and says they "worshipped the ox" and were led by a king who wore a huge ruby on a chain round his neck.

French inquisitor Cardinal Pierre d'Ailley's *Ymago Mundi* (1410) compiled ancient writings on what we'd now call natural history. D'Ailly located some cynocephali in India, where "they bark like dogs" and mentioned another dog-headed race that have "but one eye and are called Carismaspi". Christopher Columbus carefully noted in the margins of his copy of *Ymago* d'Ailly's assertion that it was difficult to determine whether "men with monstrous features and horrible appearance" inhabiting the "extreme regions" are humans or beasts.





TOP: St Christopher, seen here in an orthodox icon, was one of a number of Christian saints represented as a cynophelus.

ABOVE: A pair of dog-heads carved into the great tympanum showing Christ and the Mission of the Apostles at the abbey church of Vézelay, France.

So Columbus expected to encounter dog-headed men and other "monstrous races" in the New World. On his landing on Bohio (Haiti), he wrote: "Everyone I have met so far has said he is very frightened of the *Caniba* or *Canina* who live in the island of Bohio," and noted the terror in his Indian guides at the mention of *Canina*. Columbus's diary for 23 November 1492 recorded eyewitness accounts that the cannibals "have one eye on the forehead and the head of a dog", and he added, "I also understand that, a long distance from here, there are men with one eye and others with dogs' snouts who eat men." He and his expedition had almost no knowledge of the local language, with guides probably telling him what they thought he wanted to hear.

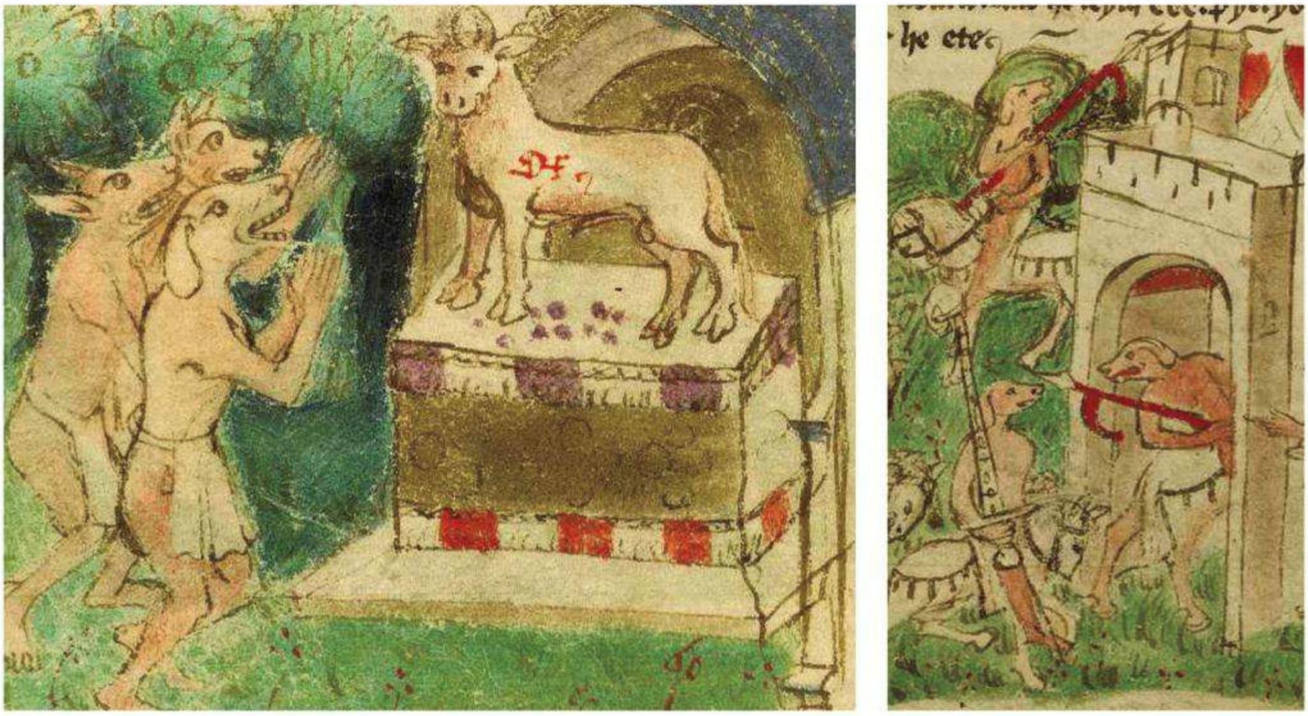
However, Columbus's rational explanation was equally bizarre: "[T]he *Caniba* are none other than the people of the Great Khan (the Emperor of China), who must be very near here. They have ships that come to these lands to capture these people and take them away. Since the people never return, it is believed that they have been eaten." It's possibly from Columbus's legendary *Caniba* ("canine") tribe that the word "cannibal" is derived.

Sponsors of conquistador expeditions continued to take dog-headed men seriously. Possibly the last example of this was instructions from Diego Velázquez de Cuéllar, Spanish governor of Hispaniola (modern Haiti/Dominican Republic), to conquistador Hernan Cortes on the eve of his 1519 expedition to Mexico, including instructions to find the "whereabouts" of Amazons and to confirm reports "of people with huge ears and even some with the faces of dogs". Columbus in a 1493 letter to Queen Isabella admitted, "In these islands I have so far found no human monstrosities, as many expected," and it was soon clear that the New World contained no cynocephali.

EXPLANATIONS

So what accounted for such widespread belief in dog-headed men for so long? Misidentified baboons seem the most likely explanation. In modern French, *un cynocéphale* just means a baboon. *Papio cynocephalus* is the scientific name of East Africa's yellow baboon, while another species is officially designated the Anubis baboon, living in the Sahara. Both Ethiopia and Western Libya, identified as the home of dog-headed men by Pliny and Herodotus respectively, are still the habitat of at least one baboon species. The 13th-century Bodleian Bestiary puts "dog-headed men" in the same section as apes and monkeys, along with the "sphinx" – *Mandrillus sphinx* – a species of the baboon's close relative, the mandrill.

"Father of cryptozoology" Bernard Heuvelmans offered the lion-tailed monkey or wanderoo (*Vetulus silenus*) of India's Western Ghats mountains as a possible inspiration for dog-headed men, while David Attenborough suggested Madagascar's rare



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ABOVE: Two images of dog-headed men (including the ox-worshippers of Nacumeran) from the *Travels of Sir John Mandeville*, mid-14th century. **BELOW:** Marco Polo's meetings with dog-heads were recorded in the *Book of the World's Marvels*, c.1300.

giant lemur or babakoto (*Indri indri*) which he noted "has a head very much like a dog and a body which is extraordinarily human in shape". And there are cases of disabled or deformed animals walking upright. Natasha, a black macaque monkey at Jerusalem Zoo, has walked exclusively on two legs since recovering from a near-fatal bout of stomach flu in 2004, while Faith, a dog born in the USA with no front legs, has learned to hop upright.[5]

Ctesias said dog-headed men lived in India, and Herodotus reported many Indian dog-handling troops in the Persian army, while both Pliny and Ctesias refer to Indian "dog-milkers", probably a variation on the *Svapaka* ("suckled by dogs") "untouchable" caste. Other "untouchable" groups in India include the Nishada "dog-cookers", relegated by caste law to the edges of towns. People given "doggie" attributes are often the lowest of the low in society, and it could be that Greek authors transmitted garbled accounts of low-caste groups in ancient India who were referred to in this way, or who traditionally performed "unclean" tasks such as breeding or handling dogs.

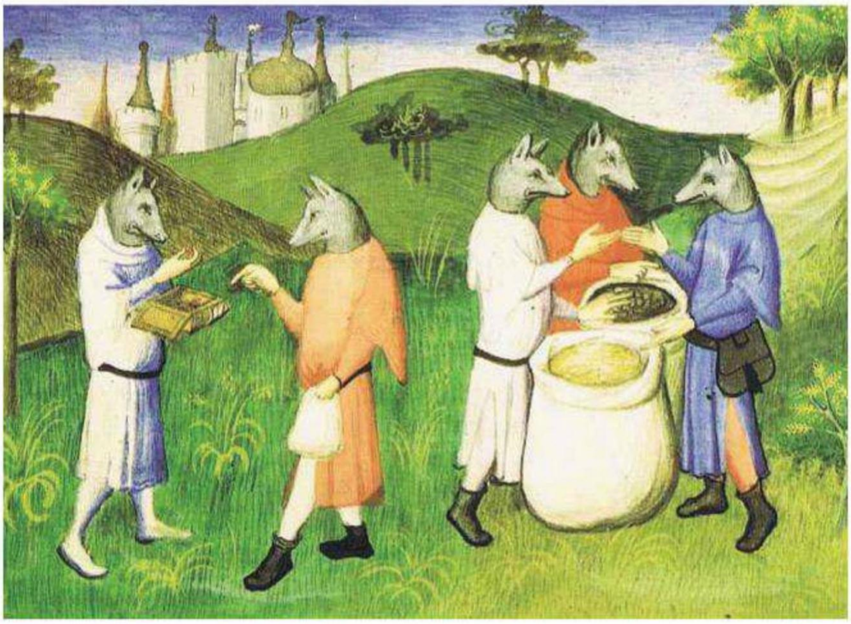
In northern India in particular, marrying outside your caste was seen as something that could give rise to "monstrous races", with some "untouchable" groups said to have originated from forbidden mixed-caste unions. Such racial anxieties are by no means unique to India – horror stories of "changelings" and "unnatural" unions with strange women on the fringes of civilised groups that would result in "monstrous births" were common the world over.

But where were the dog-headed women? On the outside of a mediæval abbey church in Vézelay, France, there's a rare depiction of a dog-headed woman and her male dog-headed partner on the road to redemption. John Mandeville's *Travels* says that in the Nicobar Islands, "Men and women of that isle have heads like dogs, and they are called Cynocephales." Over time, the dog-headed men became closely associated with the Amazons. The *Romance of Alexander* gradually turned the Amazons into the sexual partners of the dog-headed men, stating that female Amazon/dog-headed men offspring are indistinguishable from "normal" women and are assimilated into Amazonian society, while their male offspring are born with dog-heads and are inducted into the dog-headed hordes. One later version of the *Romance of Alexander* has dog-headed men living by the 'eastern Ocean' beyond the Taurus mountains with a race of women.

MODERN DOG-HEADS

Explanations aside, modern reports suggest that some dog-headed men resolutely refuse to cease existing, at least in the Mid-Western USA. Linda S Godfrey in *Hunting the American Werewolf* catalogues numerous modern sightings from the state of Wisconsin and beyond, of "Indigenous Dogmen", "manwolves", upright "bear-wolves" and the "Beast of Bray Road", a creature answering the dog-headed men description and frequently seen around Elkhorn and Kenosha County.[6]

There was a "bulge" in nocturnal

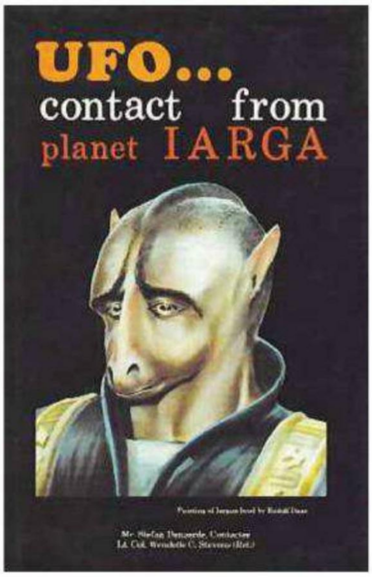


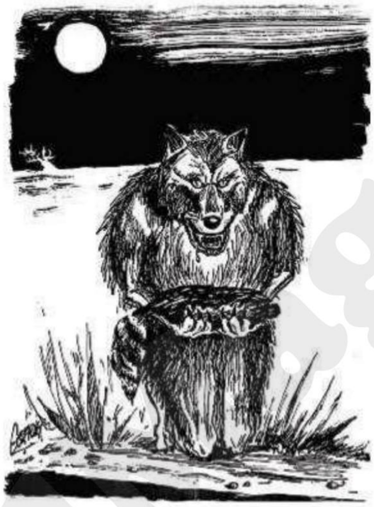
"indigenous dog-man" encounters – usually reported anonymously to Godfrey by email – throughout the early 1990s, although she found reports going back as far as 1936, when a Mark Schankelman saw a 6ft (1.8m) black, hairy, foul-smelling, pointy-eared creature "somewhere between a dog and an ape" digging at an ancient burial mound. Among the numerous sightings that Godfrey lists – including two different encounters with a group of four "manwolves" – was the sighting of a "manwolf" by several guards at Chicago's Great Lakes Naval Base in 1994.

And back in 1979, *FT*'s Malaysian correspondent Ahmad Jamaludin sent reports of several sightings of a vanishing dog-headed man at Pekan, on the country's mainland east coast (**FT35:31**; **254:80**).

Far-fetched even by the standards of dog-headed men accounts are those involving contact with dog-headed extraterrestrials associated with flying saucers. Skinwalker Ranch, Nevada, a "window area" for all manner of weirdness (see **FT169:44–47**) – some of it UFO-related – wouldn't have been complete without a sighting of a "huge hairy biped with a dog's head" seen on the ranch in 1999, which vanished into thin air when shot at.

Godfrey described her email correspondence with "Noah", who claimed to be a remote viewer who had "viewed" the Bray Road, Wisconsin, "manwolf" cluster area. This allegedly revealed to him that a "scout caste" of subterranean 7ft (2m)-tall extraterrestrial Anubis-type cyborg warriors with bio-engineered armour under their fur had been left behind after a war with another cyborg race for control of the Earth many æons ago. Godfrey concedes there is an absence of "tangible proof for Noah's claims".





LINDA S GODFREY

LEFT: Modern dog-heads range from alien beings (top) to the 'Beast of Bray Road' (bottom).

There was even an actual contact with the dog-headed extraterrestrials. Stefan Denaerden alleged in his 1969 book *Buitenaards Beschaving* (*Alien Civilisation*) that, two years earlier, while sailing off the Dutch coast, he encountered a submerged UFO. This was piloted by short aliens with dog-like faces and grey skin, from the planet Iagra. "Instruction sessions" by the dog-headed Iagrans followed, in "the language of all living species in the universe" which seemed remarkably like Dutch. The Iagran dog-heads had a single collective mind rather than individual minds, and values echoing the missionary dog-headed saints of mediæval theology – their belief system included "chosen ones who by the purity of their lives would combat the evil of Satan on other worlds".

Perhaps exploration of much of the Earth's surface and advances in our understanding of evolutionary biology will see dog-headed men exiled to outer space. FT

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

MATT SALUSBURY is news and features editor of English language industry teaching trade paper *English Language Gazette*, and an activist with the London freelance branch of the National Union of Journalists (www.londonfreelance.org). He is a regular contributor to *Fortean Times*.

NOTES

1 Tertia Barnett, archæologist: *pers. comm*; David Coulson, Chief Executive of the Trust for African Rock Art, Niarobi, Kenya: *pers. comm*; James Azema: *Footprint Libya Handbook: the Travel Guide*, Passport Books, Lincolnwood, Illinois, 2001; Wadi Mattendush: photographs and line drawings at http://bit.ly/yRv4aN (girafamania.com.br).

2 St Augustine of Hippo in his *City of God* (Book XVI, ch.9, early 5th cent. AD) placed dog-headed men in Ethiopia, and after much agonising as to whether they were human or existed at all, concluded that they were human and "were indeed descendants of Adam" and also of Cain and the disobedient sons of Noah (Genesis, 9.19). Augustine reasoned that even monstrous births had to be part of some unfathomable plan, and opened Heaven's gate to the monstrous races.

3 The staring-straight-ahead Anubis in art and sculpture doesn't always represent the god Anubis himself, but often a priest wearing a ceremonial mask of Anubis.

4 Ratharamnus's works enjoyed a revival during the Catholic Counter-reformation of the 16th century. *Epistola de Cynocephalis* in Latin is in *Patrilogia Latina* 121:1153–56 (http://bit.ly/AmKloo / columbia.edu) with extracts in English in *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought*, John Block Frieddman, Syracuse Univ. Press, New York, 2000).

5 Bernard Heuvelmans: *On the Track of Unknown Animals*, Kegan Paul, 1995 edition; David Attenborough: *Fabulous Animals*, BBC, 1975; Jon Downes & Richard Freeman: "Shug Monkeys and Werewolves – The Search for the Dog-Headed Men", *Fortean Studies* vol.5, John Brown Publishing, London 1998: video of Faith the upright-walking dog at http://bit.ly/wtXiy1 (cryptozoologynews.blogspot.com). See also **FT188:18**; **237:12**; **269:12** for a macaque, a dog, a pig and a lamb walking upright.

6 Linda S Godfrey: *Hunting the American Werewolf – Beast Men in Wisconsin and Beyond*, Trails Books, Madison, Wisconsin, 2006. I have avoided mention of anything that could conceivably fall into the "werewolf" rather than "dog-headed men" category – anything seen walking on four legs as well as two, or seen transforming to or from a canid. Cynocephali were distinct from werewolves as early as Herodotus's *Histories*, which mentions in addition to its description of dog-headed men that each man among the Neurian people of the Crimea "once a year becomes a wolf for a few days... Not that I believe this, but they constantly affirm it to be true." I have also excluded reports of "shug-monkeys" from Rendelsham Forest, Suffolk, and elsewhere in Britain, as these creatures, described as a cross between a dog and an ape or a lion and an ape, are usually on four legs don't seem to be very human-like.

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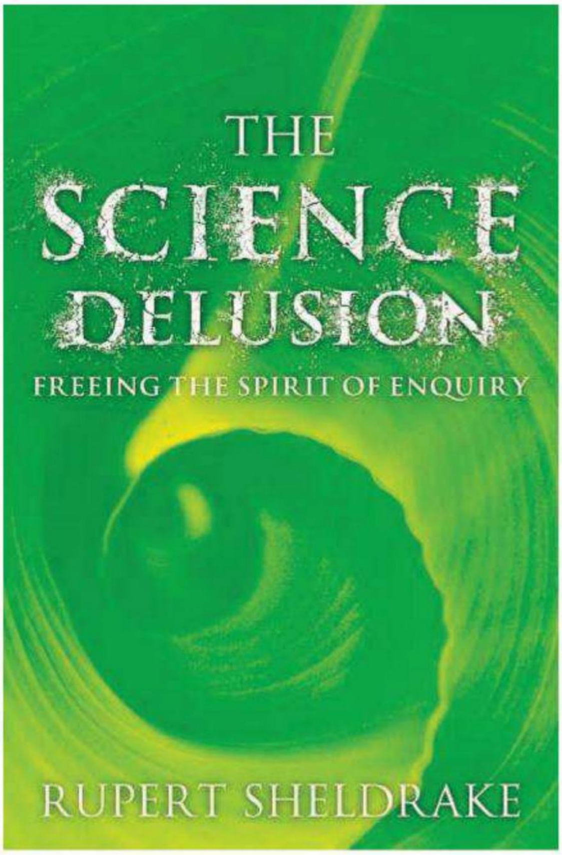
FBI FORTEAN BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

116. The Science Delusion

STEVE MARSHALL talks to Rupert Sheldrake about dogma and delusion in contemporary science.



Millions of people around the world claim personal experience of unexplained phenomena, which can be as simple as 'knowing' who is calling them when the telephone rings. Mainstream science can provide no explanation for this, other than dismissing it as mere delusion. Rupert Sheldrake, after many years of investigating telepathy, the unexplained powers of animals and human precognition, believes that he can. Sheldrake claims that his theory of 'morphic resonance' not only explains these widespread phenomena, it also shows how simple organic forms can self-organise into more complex ones, as an addition to Darwin's process of Natural Selection. According to Sheldrake:

"The formation of habits depends on a process called morphic resonance. Similar patterns of activity resonate across space and time with subsequent patterns. This hypothesis applies to all self-organising systems, including atoms, molecules, crystals, cells, plants, animals and animal societies. All draw upon a collective memory and in turn contribute to it. A growing crystal of copper sulphate, for example, is in resonance with countless previous crystals of copper sulphate, and follows the same habits of crystal organisation, the same lattice structure. A growing oak seedling follows the habits of growth and development of previous oaks. When an orb-web spider starts spinning its web, it follows the habits of countless ancestors, resonating across space and time. The more people who learn a new skill, such as snowboarding, the easier will it be for others to learn it because of morphic resonance from previous snowboarders."

There is far more to morphic resonance than this, but I'm not the one to explain, as I have to admit I don't understand all of its many aspects. Sheldrake believes that memories are not stored in the brain but somewhere outside of it; the brain recalls them not as a hard drive does, by playing back physically-stored electrical signals, but more like a television that tunes into transmitted signals and decodes them as memories. It does this by morphic resonance. Here, there are strong similarities with Carl Jung's theory of the collective unconscious and archetypes. Jung's ideas were accepted (if rather half-heartedly) by many scientists of his day; although Sheldrake does get support from some of his peers, it tends to come privately. His explorations into the liminal areas of science are particularly unpopular with dogmatic sceptics, who regard the work as 'pseudoscience' and "outside the scope of scientific experiment'.

But Sheldrake, to the chagrin of his detractors, is not just another amateur crackpot but a *bona fide* scientist – a Cambridge-trained biochemist with a double-first-class honours degree and a doctorate. Before developing his current interest in parapsychology, he led more conventional research programmes and made important discoveries in plant physiology. Criticism of Sheldrake's work makes fascinating reading, as it reveals so much about his critics. There is a good deal of professional jealousy and resentment that Sheldrake's research continues to be funded by Cambridge University, and sour grapes because he sells a lot of books. Most commonly, his theories and findings are dismissed because they do not conform to accepted scientific dogma; this has made him a particular target of the materialists. Frequent, vitriolic attacks are not directed just at Sheldrake's work either; in 2008, he was stabbed in the leg by a Japanese madman who had followed him to the USA, believing that Sheldrake was using mind-control techniques on him (**FT236:5**).

Sheldrake has borne all of this with uncommon grace and good humour; however, he retaliates with his latest book *The Science Delusion*, an elegant counter-attack on scientific materialism. As attacks go, it is rather polite and gentlemanly, but effective.

Just before publication, I spoke to Sheldrake about the ideas in the book and his motives for writing it. First, the title, which appears to be a direct swipe at Richard Dawkins. Did Dawkins really inspire this response?

"No," admits Sheldrake, "the title was at the insistence of my publishers, and the book will be re-titled in the USA as *Science Set Free*. Dawkins is far less important outside Britain. Actually, he's not really very important here either – it's just that the British media find him a convenient figurehead for the tide of evangelical atheism we've seen in recent years. Dawkins is a passionate believer in materialist dogma, but the book is not a response to him – although I do object to his dumbed-down representation of science.

"I've actually been thinking about the ideas in this book for many years, perhaps 30 or 40. Certainly, since I was an undergraduate and realised that something had gone horribly wrong with science. There was no point in dealing with the problem piecemeal: it was essential to look at the whole picture. There were so many assumptions in place and I wanted to open things up, which is what I've done by turning the issues into questions."

The Science Delusion begins by laying out the 10 dogmata of modern science:

Everything is essentially

mechanical. Dogs, for example, are complex mechanisms, rather than living organisms with goals of their own. Even people are machines, "lumbering robots", in Richard Dawkins's vivid phrase, with brains that are like genetically programmed computers.

All matter is unconscious. It has no inner life or subjectivity or point of view. Even human consciousness is an illusion produced by the material activity of brains.

The total amount of matter and energy is always the same (with the exception of the Big Bang, when all the matter and energy of the Universe suddenly appeared).

The laws of nature are fixed. They are the same today as they were at the beginning, and they will stay the same forever.

Nature is purposeless, and evolution has no goal or direction.

All biological inheritance is material, carried in the genetic material, DNA, and in other material structures.

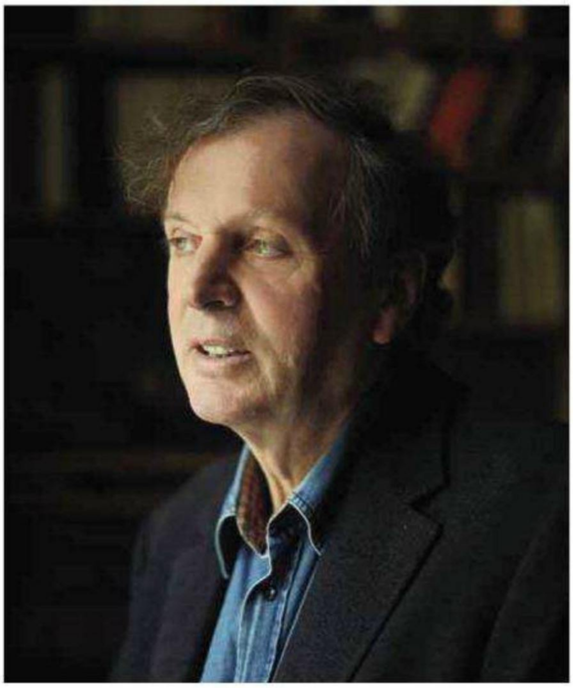
Minds are inside heads and are nothing but the activities of brains. When you look at a tree, the image of the tree you are seeing is not 'out there', where it seems to be, but inside your brain.

Memories are stored as material traces in brains and are wiped out at death.

Unexplained phenomena like telepathy are illusory.

Mechanistic medicine is the only kind that really works.

Each of these is allotted a chapter in the form of a question, and a short list of further related questions addressed directly to materialists. Some are very funny, highlighting the inherent and often silly contradictions in so much accepted dogma. *Is Nature Mechanical?*, for example, points out that the mechanistic theory was intended to be a metaphor but has come to be taken literally. Living organisms are *not* automata, a fact that is patently obvious to any cat or dog owner; few readers would regard themselves as a genetically programmed machine in a mechanical Universe. As Sheldrake puts it: "Most of us feel we are truly alive in a living world – at least at weekends." Two of his questions to materialists are: "Do you think that you yourself are nothing but a complex machine?" and "Have you been programmed to believe in materialism?"



ABOVE: Maverick biologist and morphic resonance theorist Rupert Sheldrake.

ETIENNE GILFILLAN

In 2008, he was stabbed in the leg by a madman

Sheldrake questions many of science's basic 'truths', which are revealed, with splendid irony, to be either assumptions or, heaven forbid, *beliefs*. That the Universe began with a Big Bang has been orthodoxy since the 1960s, but it is actually a theory, and one that raises as many questions as it provides answers. Sheldrake does not dispute the theory but compares it to religious creation myths, all of which begin with an initial act of creation by God; the Big Bang theory is different only in that God has been removed from the story. One of the basic tenets of physics is the law of conservation of matter and energy, which asserts that neither can be created or destroyed: the amount of matter and energy in the Universe is always the same. Except of course, in the primal singularity of the Big Bang, when the Universe appeared from nothing, violating all of science's laws. Sheldrake quotes Terence McKenna: "It's almost as if science said, 'Give me one free miracle, and from there the entire thing will proceed with a seamless, causal explanation.'"

Most physicists believe that only about four per cent of the mass and energy in the Universe is conventional; the remaining 96 per cent is made up of 'dark matter' and 'dark energy', about which nothing is known. Gravitation should be slowing down the expansion of the Universe, but observations made in the mid-1990s showed that it is actually speeding up. The continued expansion of the Universe is now believed to be driven by dark energy, which is reckoned to account for 73 per cent of the Universe's total mass-energy. In the current model, the amount of dark energy may be increasing, counteracting the gravitational pull that should make the Universe contract, driving its expansion in an apparently continuous process of creation. This should not be possible, but the conservation laws apply only to the four per cent of 'standard' matter and energy, not necessarily to the mysterious remaining 96 per cent. In the light of modern cosmology, asks Sheldrake, how can anyone possibly be sure that the total amount of matter and energy has always been the same?

The reliability of another of science's 'constants' is also doubtful: the speed of light may not be as constant as we have been led to believe. "When I investigated this some years ago," Sheldrake tells me, "I came to realise that although the speed of light is assumed to be constant and precisely known, there is evidence to suggest otherwise. The speed of light is measured regularly, in university laboratories all around the world, and each comes up with slightly different results. The final figure is arrived at by a committee of expert metrologists who average the 'best' results and arrive at a consensus. But this is not based on *all* the results they are supplied with; some are discarded, either because they differ too much from what is expected or because their source is not considered totally reliable."

Measurement of the speed of light began in the early 20th century. Initially, there were considerable variations, but by 1927 the experts had agreed on an "entirely satisfactory" speed of 299,796km (186,300 miles) per second. The following year, this mysteriously dropped by around 20km (12 miles) per second. The new speed was recorded all around the world, with the 'best' values closely matching. This lower speed remained constant from about 1928 to 1945, then in the late 1940s it went back up again. It was suggested by some scientists that this might indicate cyclical variations in the speed of light.

"Now we may never know," Sheldrake laments, "because the problem was eventually solved by locking the speed of light into a closed loop. The metre is now defined by the speed of light – which is defined in metres. So if the speed of light really *does* vary in the future, the metre will vary with it, and we shall have no way of telling! I took this up," he goes on, "with some of the experts. I visited one – he actually had a sign on his door saying *Chief Metrologist*. When I inquired about the 1928 to 1945 variation he muttered, 'Oh you know about that, do you?' He admitted it was a little embarrassing that so many respected scientists had made faulty measurements during that period…

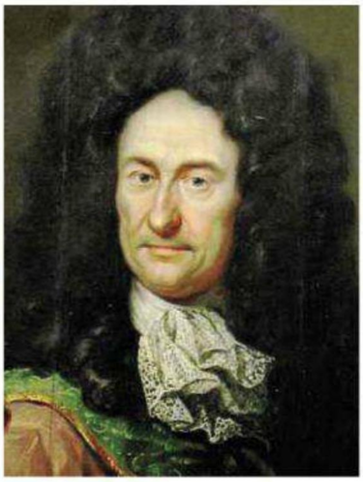
"'But this is interesting!' I said. 'What if there really *were* variations? Shouldn't it be investigated?' He looked at me aghast. 'Whatever for? The speed of light is a *constant*!' The Universal Gravitational Constant also varies," adds Sheldrake, "but they're a bit more open about that."

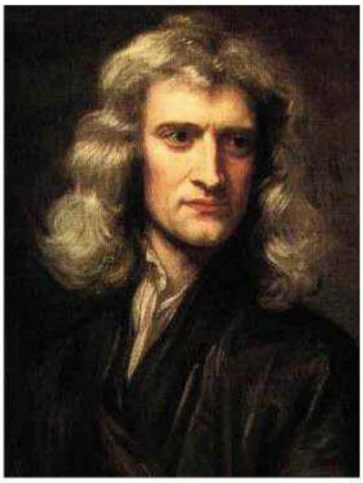
The constancy of the speed of light is regarded as sacrosanct among physicists. When alleged 'faster than light' neutrinos made world news last summer, the celebrated Professor Brian Cox explained the issue in layman's terms for BBC radio. Adamant that the speed of light is a "universal speed limit" that can never be exceeded, he came up with a neat analogy. If an aeroplane were to travel from London to Australia at this absolute maximum speed, there would be no way of making the journey any faster. Apart from, he added, digging a tunnel through the Earth and taking a shortcut. So you see, declared Cox cheerfully, the neutrinos are not necessarily travelling any faster than light – they may be simply taking a shortcut through another dimension! To a non-physicist, it seems surprising that experts find it easier to accept a universe of multiple dimensions (which is possible, but only theoretical) than to question scientific dogma.

Are memories stored as material traces in the brain? Sheldrake is not alone in concluding that they are not. Since the 1890s, a vast amount of research time and money has been spent on this fascinating question and still no traces have been found. Typically, laboratory animals are taught to perform some task, then parts of their brains are surgically removed; later, they can still remember what they have been taught, despite in some cases having hardly any brain left at all. The animals presumably also learn to distrust humans wearing white coats. Sheldrake explores the evidence in great detail and puts a very convincing case. One of his arguments against physically-stored memory is that: "Memories can persist for decades, yet the nervous system is dynamic, continually changing, and so are the molecules within it." So how could memory be stored in the brain so that it is not lost by molecular turnover? Sheldrake cites recent experiments in which caterpillars were taught to avoid a stimulus. After undergoing two larval moults and metamorphosis within the pupæ, the resultant moths still remembered what they had learned as caterpillars.

Sheldrake maintains that memories are stored somewhere outside of the brain and retrieved by morphic resonance. So could these memories – and perhaps ideas – be accessed by others? I once met the late Bob Moog at a Theremin convention and thanked the Great Man for inventing voltage-controlled synthesisers. To my surprise, he looked slightly embarrassed and shrugged: "Oh, it was no big deal, just an idea that was going around at that time – it was in the air. Lots of other people must have had the same idea, but I was just lucky that I was able to do something with it." Most creative people have experienced the *zeitgeist* at some time or other; had Sheldrake, I inquired, ever known any materialist scientists to complain of falling victim to it?

"No," he laughs. "But I'm probably the last person they'd tell about it anyway! It has happened many times in science though: Newton and Leibniz, for instance, both simultaneously invented Calculus. On the 75th anniversary of *Vogue* magazine, I was invited to a symposium at Vogue House to talk on morphic resonance and the zeitgeist. There were many people from the fashion world – designers, retailers and so on, and some from finance and the stock market. All were convinced there *is* a zeitgeist and that they had experienced it. Some had suspected they had spies working inside their company, passing ideas onto their rivals! But it's people accessing a collective memory. I haven't dealt with creativity at all in this book, but I believe creative people may be tapping into something beyond space and time.





DUPLICATION THEORY: Leibniz (left) and Newton (below) developed Calculus independently and at the same time.

"When I was writing *A New Science of Life*, I was very aware that others must be working on the same idea, so I'd better get on with it. And sure enough, there were two or three. One of them, Nicholas Greaves, was not a scientist but an estate agent; he just had this idea come into his head and felt he must express it. His version is called 'Duplication Theory'. We met, and found that both of us had ideas that were very similar."

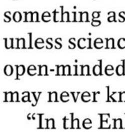
In *The Science Delusion*, Sheldrake reminds us that scientists are, above all else, *human*, with all the shortcomings and foibles of other mere mortals: "They compete for funding and prestige, constrained by peer-group pressures and hemmed in by prejudices and taboos." This image runs directly counter to that actively promoted by scientists in recent history – one of a totally impartial, dispassionate elite, who can be uniquely relied upon to reveal the exact truth. Sheldrake quotes Ricky Gervais, who naïvely claims that: "Science is humble… It doesn't get offended when new facts come along." This popular view of science is aired regularly in the media by other high-profile celebrities. Stephen Fry ("The stupid person's clever person") is an enthusiastic devotee of Richard Dawkins, whose supporters, incidentally, include a surprising number of comedians.

Since the Enlightenment of the 18th century, the world of science has professed to operate in "an open-minded spirit of enquiry" but this is rarely true in practice; any modern research programme is under a good deal of pressure to not produce unexpected or unwanted results. Making waves by questioning accepted dogma is simply not on. Rupert Sheldrake may well be correct in his assertion that something fundamental has been ignored by science – it could even be something as important as gravity. But unless science comes to practise the open-mindedness that it preaches, we may never know. As Sheldrake writes:

"In the Enlightenment ideal, science was a path to knowledge that would transform humanity for the better. Science and reason were the vanguard. These were, and still are, wonderful ideals, and they have inspired scientists for generations. They inspire me. I am all in favour of science and reason if they are scientific and reasonable. But I am against granting scientists and the materialist worldview an exemption from critical thinking and sceptical investigation. We need an enlightenment of the Enlightenment."

Rupert Sheldrake website: www.sheldrake.org
Nicholas Greaves website: www.mindandmemory.net

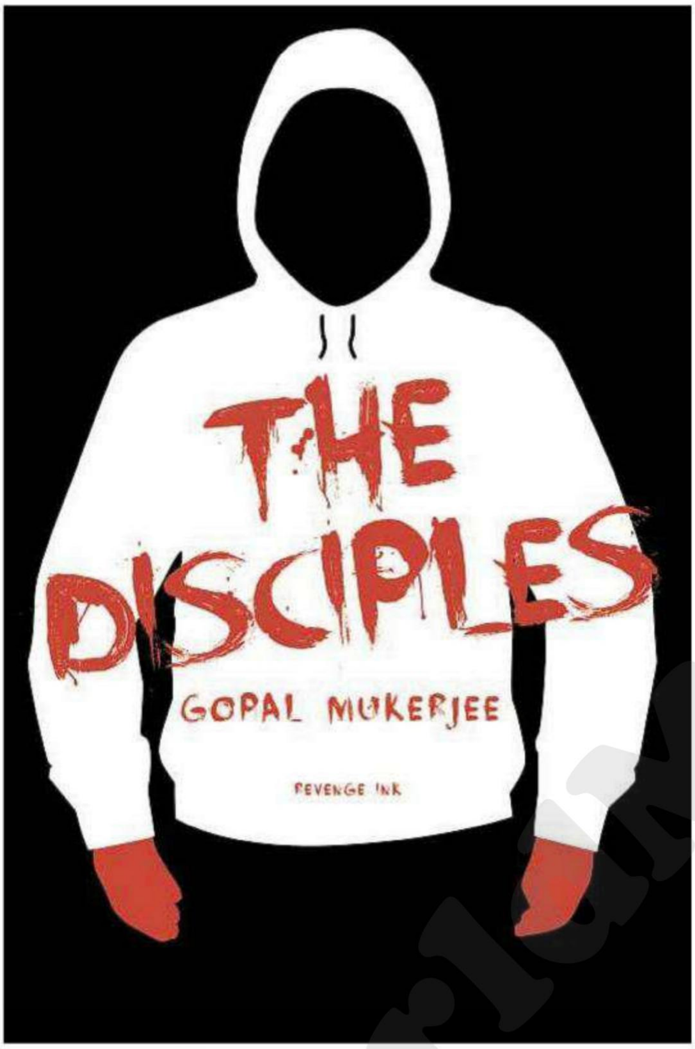
The Science Delusion: Freeing the Spirit of Enquiry by Rupert Sheldrake is published by Coronet Books, priced £19.99.



STEVE MARSHALL worked as a composer and musician for 30 years. He now writes on archæology, as well as for *FT*, and is finishing a book on Avebury to be published later this year.

REVENGE INK

THIS HALLOWEEN, READ YOUR WAY TO THE DARKSIDE



THE DISCIPLES: A NOVEL FOR THE APOCALYPSE,

GOPAL MUKERJEE (CO-FOUNDER REVENGE INK)

ISBN 978-0-9565119-5-9
RELEASE: OCTOBER 31, 2011 PRICE: £7.99

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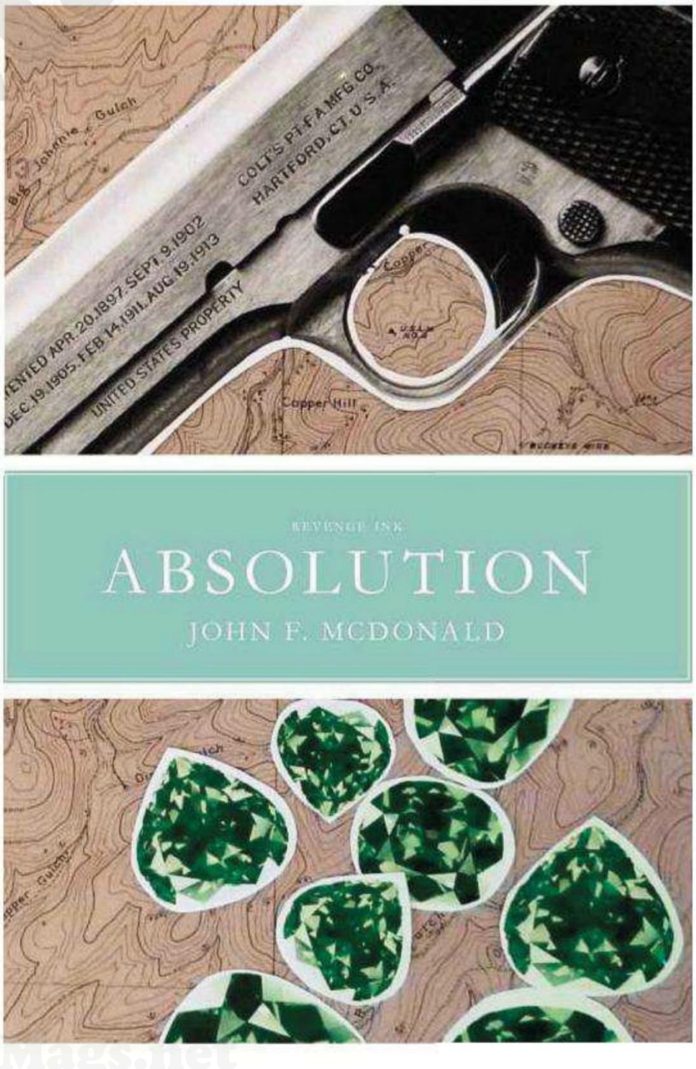
ABSOLUTION,

JOHN F MCDONALD

ISBN 978-0-9565119-4-2
RELEASE: SEP 22, 2011 PRICE: £7.99

From the co-author of bestselling memoir Borstal Girl comes a densely researched thriller about terrorism and fundamentalism in *all* their forms. When Mohammed Sharif from Kashmir finds a 'miracle' emerald in Burma, he takes it to his new friend, Christian Childe, an English financial trader in Bangkok. They seek out Daniel Hutten, a Jewish gemstone expert from New York. But will these unlikely friends find peace? Or will their pasts return to haunt them? Read this and find out.



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WHEN GENIUS IS DEAD, EVERYMAN COUNTS...

WIRED FOR GOD?

In the first of two articles, **CHARLES FOSTER** traverses the worlds of religion and science to ask what we should make of 'spiritual experiences'.

Every human being, of every belief and none, has 'spiritual' experiences. They are as ubiquitous as teeth and hair, but more durable.

If you read the great religious classics, you'll find exhilarating accounts of spiritual epiphany. Those epiphanies were taken by the people who had them, and by their disciples, as evidence that God was real, and that he was communicating directly with them. The experiences gave reassurance and theological conviction, and were often the basis of conclusions about the attributes of God. But religious people need to be very careful about the claims they make for their experiences. Similar epiphanies are experienced by atheistic non-saints at the edge of sleep or consciousness, in the throes of sexual orgasm or while staving it off, or simply while walking to the shops.

'Spiritual' experiences are very uniform and very predictable. If you dance round a Kalahari bush fire or an inner city club until you're exhausted and dehydrated, you'll go to the shamanic world depicted in the great cave paintings of the Upper Palæolithic. When a Peruvian shaman drinks ayahuasca with a German banker, they wander in the same lush, vegetative world, entranced by the same highly coloured, intelligent snakes. The common veterinary anæsthetic ketamine produces in humans, and no doubt in animals too, a reliable, destiny-changing out-of-body experience. There must be lots of cats who have exchanged their testicles and their libido for the enlightenment that you hope for after an ascetic lifetime in a Himalayan ashram. If you have scintillating scotoma you'll see the dazzling auras that triggered some of the great devotional literature of the Middle Ages. And it's not for nothing that Hippocrates called epilepsy 'the sacred disease'.

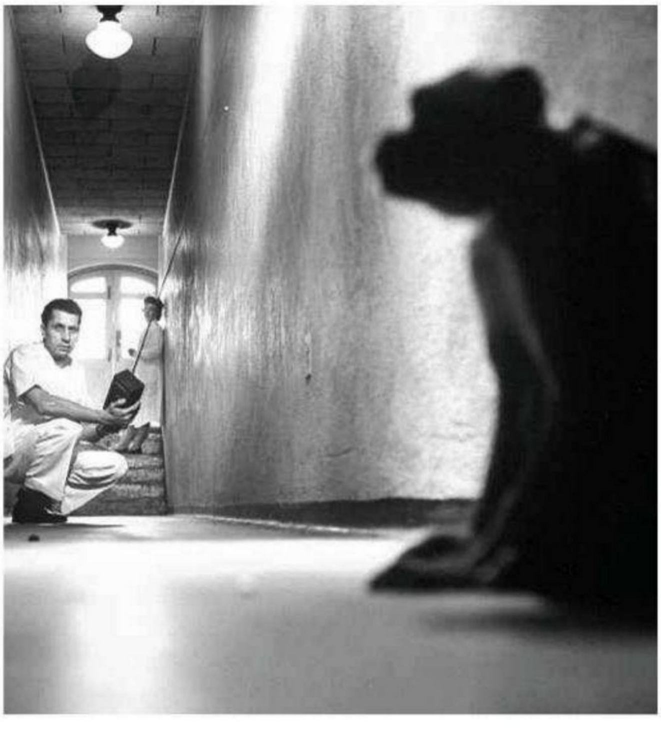
This month and next, I look at these and other experiences and ask two questions: What, if anything, do they tell us about what it means to be human? And do they imply God?

WHAT DO THESE EXPERIENCES TELL US ABOUT BEING HUMAN? AND DO THEY IMPLY GOD?

AMPHIBIOUS HUMANS

It's obvious that some things that affect our bodies affect our 'spirits' (whatever *they* are). The physiologist Jose Delgado implanted electrodes into bulls' brains (see **FT95:36, 38, 39**). He could stop a bull's charge by flicking a switch. And at least to some extent, in the realm of religion and morality just as much as elsewhere, we are Delgadan bulls. It's just a question of finding the right switch.

If the Pope gets depressed, his faith will hæmorrhage away. But if he takes Prozac, it will restore the right balance of chemicals in his brain. Faith and colour will flood back into his world. God will be rethroned. If a previously sweet-natured child gets a tumour in her limbic system, she could seem psychopathic. She'll be the terror of the playground. Resect the tumour and the kind, considerate little girl will



GETTY IMAGES / TIME LIFE PICTURES / JOHN LOENGARD

LEFT: Dr Jose Delgado transmits electronic signals into a monkey's brain with a remote device.

FACING PAGE: Does a shaman flick a similar switch to access the spiritual realm?

ABOVE PHOTO: GETTY IMAGES / YURI YURIEV

return. Remove a soldier's amygdala, and he could win the Victoria Cross. He'll be utterly fearless, and will rush into no-man's land careless of his own safety. But stimulate the amygdala electronically, and the world will be full of horrors.

Fear and awe are closely related in Judæo-Christian thought, and the scent centres are closely anatomically related to the amygdala. The incense rising from altars and votive tables might be tickling the amygdala, generating sensations of religious awe. The incense might literally be rising to the neurobiological throne of God.

What do the religious people say about all this? On one level, these observations present some profound theological difficulties. Was the depressed Pope's faithlessness a sin? If he died before the Prozac cut in, would he be hurled into the lake of fire? And what about the girl with the limbic system tumour? Was she culpable when she beat up her classmates? As we learn more about the biological basis of behaviour, the problems multiply. Is it right to lock someone up for behaviour generated by his genes?

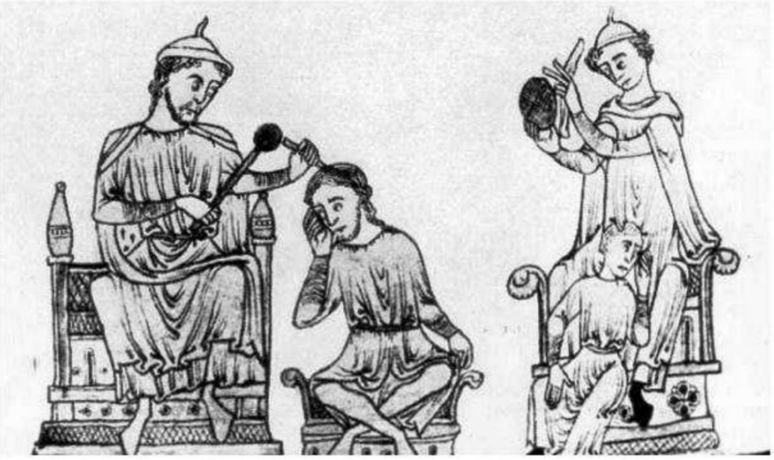
The Judæo-Christian tradition does not even stammer out a tentative answer to these questions. But on another level (and in relation to more general and less troubling questions), the tradition is more confident. Humans, it says, aren't just spirits: they exist in at least two dimensions at once – the body and the spirit. They are amphibians, inhabiting two worlds. Those worlds affect each other. And that, say the religious, means that the neuroscientific exotica aren't terribly surprising at all.

Reductionists mock that answer, contending that since we can see things going on in our neurones when spiritual experiences are occurring, it is reasonable to conclude that the experiences are nothing but those bursts of neuronal activity. We return later to that contention.

GOD HEAD: THE ANATOMY OF ECSTASY

We now have some ideas about what's going on inside people's heads and cells when they are having some of the experiences they describe as 'mystical'.

It has long been thought that there may be a 'god spot' in the brain – a particular locus which is the seat of religious feeling. There can be few parts of the brain that



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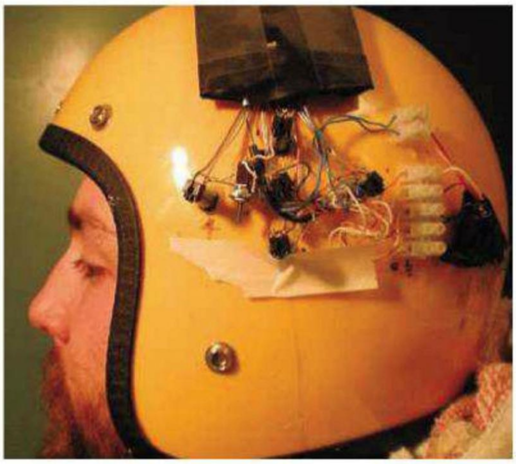

MICHAEL PERSINGER

ABOVE LEFT: Trepanation has been used to treat illness and to reach higher states of consciousness. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Michael Persinger's 'God Helmet' stimulates the wearer's temporal lobes in order to produce 'religious' type encounters; although it famously didn't work on Richard Dawkins.

have not (in a naïvely phrenological way), been dignified with that title by someone, although the pineal gland is an ancient favourite, and the forehead has often been thought of as the gate through which the Almighty processes on his way to take up his neuronal palace. In 1970, Amanda Feilding (below) was shown on prime time TV, boring a hole through her own forehead in an attempt to let Him in (see **FT58:44–45**; **134:6**; **137:66**).

The American scientist Michael Persinger (**FT42:50–54**; **201:39**; **205:4** and *passim*) thinks that he knows exactly where God is: he's in your temporal lobes. Persinger is the designer of the "god helmet" – a modified motorcycle helmet which, when placed on a subject's head, stimulates the temporal lobes on one side. A fair proportion of people say that they experience a presence in the room when this happens. They use the sort of language that religious people use when they describe their precious, personal encounters with God. What's going on, says Persinger, is that the non-stimulated half of the brain is detecting the electronic activity on the other side and calling it a person. That's not surprising, he argues: each hemisphere has a remarkable amount of autonomy, as indicated dramatically by the 'split brain' patients whose hemispheres are isolated from one another by surgery or disease. In some sense, then, the contralateral hemisphere is indeed almost another person.

Persinger's ideas have not had the attention from the neuroscientific establishment that they deserve. He's viewed, rather unfairly, as a maverick. The work of Andrew Newberg on meditators, however, is taken much more seriously.

Experienced meditators from all religious traditions say that, when they reach the climax of their practice, they feel a mystic one-ness with the Universe, and they're certain that this experience is far more real than the workaday world that they've left. "I've touched God," they'll say, "and beside him, my own body's like mist." What's happening?

IT HAS LONG BEEN THOUGHT THAT THERE IS A 'GOD SPOT' IN THE BRAIN

The parietal lobes tell you the limits of your body – where you end and the rest of the Universe begins. If you have a parietal tumour you might try to throw your own leg out of bed, thinking that it's not yours. The thalamus acts as a sort of neurological sluice gate, controlling the supply of information to the brain. It's open at the busy, mundane times. It's associated with Monday mornings and full in-trays: those times when we say to ourselves: "This is the *real* world". Normally, of course, when the thalamus is wide open, the parietal lobes are most active. Those Monday mornings in the office aren't noted for generating feelings of blissful blending with the rest of creation. But when meditators clamber onto the meditative mountaintop, the parietal lobes are shut down (producing a sense of oneness with the world), while, paradoxically, the thalamus is open (causing the meditator to believe that the dissolution of the boundaries of Self represents a reality more substantial and essential than that of the Monday morning office).

We know, too, that when, using drugs or dancing, we broker an uneasy peace between the normally warring sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems, altered states of consciousness pop up – exhilaratingly or disturbingly. That's why the shaman, the dervish and the teenager are dancing. The sympathetic system is the fear, fight or flight system – the system of strong coffee and adrenaline, stimulated by blue flashing lights, roaring lions and short skirts. The parasympathetic is the system of cocoa, log fires and slippers. If the parasympathetic and sympathetic can be switched fully on at the same time, the pharmacological paradox of their alliance can do wonderful things. It's as if that sort of paradox can't be accommodated within our ordinary world, and we have to be taken to another plane of being that's big enough or weird enough to hold it. Many of the great religions of the world (and most explicitly those of the East), have as their goal the unity of opposites, and may prescribe the intense contemplation of rationally insoluble paradoxes (for instance by the Zen study of koans) in order to reach that goal. What happens in religious ecstasy seems to be a biochemical analogue of that process.

Sometimes one is conscious of the conduit between this world and another. One might go through the clichéd tunnel towards the bright light, where you're likely to meet (alongside your dead relatives) the great figures of your own religious tradition. Devout clericalised Catholics may meet the Pope or their favourite Cardinal; other Christians may meet Jesus; Hindus with a particular affiliation to Dubta are likely to be greeted by him as they step into the light; Indians without an affiliation, curiously, file past a bespectacled bureaucrat with a clip board who checks them into eternity with a tick. Others drift slowly out of their bodies, looking calmly down at the frantic paramedics trying to restart their hearts.

There are fairly convincing physiological explanations for these out-of-body and near-death phenomena – notably those suggested by Susan Blackmore and Kevin Nelson. Interestingly, these experiences are reported more commonly by younger patients, which may suggest that they always happen in severely anoxic conditions (and thus we'll all have them eventually), but that only those people who have good short term memory anyway are able to recall what they experienced. Their accurate reproducibility using drugs and

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extreme physiological stresses, together with the culturally conditioned variety of the experiences, indicates that they are theologically pretty worthless. The Evangelical pastor Todd Burpo has written a book, *Heaven is for Real*, about his four-year-old son's "visit to Heaven" during life-saving surgery. It has been a massive commercial hit – number one on the *New York Times* bestseller list. Conservative Christians say that it vindicates their view of Heaven. But if the child had been a Sikh, he'd have met Guru Nanak Dev Ji, and if he'd taken a dose of DMT, he'd have gone to Heaven and back without giving his poor parents the fright of their lives.

TRIPPING TO RELIGIOUS ECSTASY

If you drive out of the smog of Athens towards Corinth, past the stink of the refinery and chemical works at Elefsina, you'll be travelling along the Sacred Way. Up until a couple of millennia ago, nervous, fasting initiates walked this route. They were going to the Temple of Demeter, at Eleusis. It was here that the ancient world lost its fear of death.

The ruins of the Temple still stand. On a nearby hill, a Greek Orthodox church looks disdainfully down at the ruins, saying quite clearly: "Our mysteries have superseded yours. The keys of Heaven and Hell have been passed to us." But for a long time the experiential power of the Eleusinian Mysteries gave a comfort to the central Mediterranean elite with which the mainly intellectual assurances of the Judæo-Christian tradition found it hard to compete.

We don't know what happened inside the dark Temple. Indeed the phrase "If I told you, I'd have to kill you" comes from the oath sworn by the initiates. But we know what the experience *did*. "Happy is he," wrote Pindar, "who, having seen these rites, goes below the hollow earth, for he knows the end of life and its god-sent beginning." For many, the experience gave not just knowledge and confidence, but life beyond the grave. "Thrice happy are those mortals who, having seen these rites, depart from Hades," thought Sophocles, "for to them alone is granted to have a true life there. For the rest, all is evil."

We also know that as the devotees filed into the temple they were given a drink called *kykeon*, made from water, barley and mint. And that might well be the explanation for the Mysteries.

In a laboratory in Basel, in 1943, the chemist Albert Hofmann felt agitated and dizzy. He had been working on a substance derived from ergot – a fungus that can contaminate grain. Wondering if this substance might be responsible, he took a very small dose in water. His world fell apart. Chairs became malevolent; his neighbours became masked witches. But then the evil dissolved; the newly created world shimmered with love and light. Lucy was in the Sky with Diamonds, and all was for the best in this best of all possible worlds. He had discovered LSD.

The *kykeon* of Eleusis may have been contaminated with ergot. The Mysteries may have been an acid trip.

The use of psychedelic drugs is immeasurably old. As we will see, these drugs may have been the midwives of truly modern man. The cave paintings of Upper Palæolithic Europe, some going back 35,000 years, may contain coded evidence of hallucinogens; a mushroom-using shaman, 10,000 years old, strides across a rock wall in the Tassili mountains of Algeria; magic mushrooms seem to have been used in Mayan temples in Guatemala, and perhaps the journeys of the ancient Egyptian dead, presided over by the animal-human hybrids, were journeys done and illustrated by shape-shifting shamans who used the blue lotus to shuttle between worlds.

In Plaincourault, France, there's a 13th-century fresco depicting the Fall of Man. But this one is unusual. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is plainly a mushroom tree. It's as if the Christian tradition itself is saying that the fruit that so dramatically determined the future of the human race was one of the hallucinogenic mushrooms used so commonly by the shamans of the West. Some say that you can see traces of mushroom cults in Ezekiel and John of Patmos. Both prophets are told to eat a 'scroll' offered to them. They do so, and visions follow. John is even warned about the pains often reported by magic mushroom users: "It will be bitter to your stomach," says the angel.

Every Christmas, we unconsciously remember our shamanic roots. Santa always wears red and white. But why? In Europe and throughout Russia, one of the main fuels for shamanic journeying has long been the red and white fly agaric mushroom *Amanita muscaria*. When the Siberian shamans take it, they go up through the smoke hole in the centre of the yurt, and come back down through the same chimney, carrying with them the gifts they've collected in the other world, which they then distribute to the grateful people. Father Christmas is a mushroom. (**FT192:48, 49**)

Most areas have a favourite theological hallucinogen. In central Africa, you can ingest the bark of the iboga tree, which, eucharistically, you will be told is the body of God. The Iboga spirit will materialise before you as a ball of light. Mescaline, from the peyote cactus of central America, let Aldous Huxley see the Being of Platonic philosophy, "a bunch of flowers… quivering under the pressure of the significance with which they were charged" (see **FT180:28–32**). Californian tour operators run package trips to the Amazon basin where an extract of ayahuasca, the 'Vine of the Dead', will make you vomit violently and see your dead relatives. For Rastafarians, references in Genesis and Exodus to 'herbs' are references to cannabis. Since the holy anointing oil of Exodus and the Jerusalem temple was cannabis oil, Jesus, the

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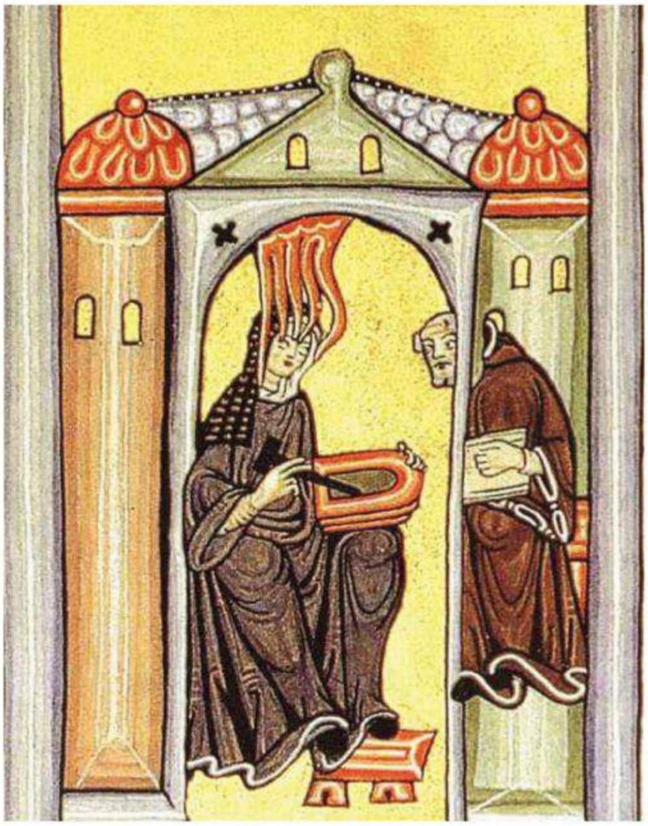
ABOVE: Dervishes perform the Sema or Whirling Ceremony. This sacred prayer lifts these Sufi adherents into a trance-like state.



ABOVE LEFT: St Hildegard of Bingen's dazzling epiphanies would now perhaps be interpreted as a form of migraine.

ABOVE RIGHT: Bernini's celebrated sculpture of St Teresa of Avilon captures the often powerfully erotic charge of the saint's writings.

anointed Messiah, was anointed with cannabis. My own favourite drug of choice (ideally contained in red Burgundy or Somerset farm cider), was used by all sorts of cultists, but perhaps most colourfully by the Bacchic Mænads who, transformed by industrial quantities of Attic wine, achieved the same sort of ecstatic union with their god as, some say, was being hinted at by Jesus when he similarly prescribed the consumption of red wine whenever his followers wanted to remember him and be part of his body.

What do these substances do? Well, many things. I'll attempt a summary in a moment. But, broadly, they take you to somewhere different. They are magic carpets; witches' brooms; the doors of wardrobes leading to strange woods. And the travel books that the voyagers write are peppered with unmistakably theological language. People are changed by their experiences in ways that look similar to the changes effected by religious conversion or by ecstatic experience in an explicitly religious context.

OTHER PORTALS

But there are other portals to these other worlds too. Disease is one of them. Epileptics have often been the high priests of their cultures – the groundbreaking visionaries. Dostoyevsky, himself epileptic, wrote in *The Idiot*, that "I have really touched God. He came into me myself… You all, healthy people, can't imagine the happiness which we epileptics feel during the second before our attack." Ellen White, the founder of the Seventh Day Adventist movement, described her visions of the Advent people, dazzlingly illuminated, processing towards Jerusalem. These are classic epileptic visions: an accident as a child had made her a lifelong epileptic.

EPILEPTICS HAVE OFTEN BEEN THE HIGH PRIESTS OF THEIR CULTURES

The disease can conjure demons as well as angels. The English writer Karen Armstrong met a malignant presence during a seizure: "I found myself invaded by the familiar stench… I was convinced that somebody was standing beside me. I could almost glimpse his face out of the corner of my eye. An aged, senile mask, with empty eyes… The world had become uncanny and horrifying… [I] was aware only of my extreme terror, a cold, sickening dread that made everything around me seem brown, rotten, and repulsive…"

Similar electric shimmerings course through the brains of people with profound migraine. Hildegard of Bingen's writings are full of bright lights, haloes and bedazzlement. You can make her diagnosis (scintillating scotoma, a form of migraine) confidently from her descriptions of her epiphanies.

Sometimes the bedroom is the gateway to spiritual bliss. Look at Bernini's wonderful depiction of the Ecstasy of St Teresa of Avila. An angel is about to penetrate her with phallic arrows. Her face is turned heavenward with a look of unmistakable orgasmic bliss. Bernini had done his homework. Teresa's writings, along with many other great religious classics, are rampantly erotic. God was plainly using the same chemical pathways as would have been excited by a human lover. The whole tradition of Tantric sexual practice knows this very well. A human lover can produce an almost literal transport of delight. The transport, here, is to somewhere not far from the feet of God.

The relationship between experience and belief is a fascinating and complex one: we explore it next month. Despite its complexity, we can uncontroversially say that experience and belief are closely related. Which means that it's worth noting, as we look at the biological basis of experience, that there's an obvious genetic predisposition to belief (and probably, therefore, to spiritual experience). Of course there's no 'God gene': something as complex as belief is bound to be multi-factorial and multi-chromosomal. But twin studies make the genetic contribution perfectly plain. If you separate identical twins at birth, and raise one in Saudi Arabia and the other in Tennessee, the first will be a Sunni Muslim, and the second will be Christian. But their degree of religious fervour is highly likely to be very similar. Environment's important too, of course. The Jesuits who insisted in their sinister way: "Give me the child, and I will show you the

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ABOVE: A Peruvian ayahuasca ceremony. Drug-generated trips share common ground with 'genuine' spiritual experience, but do they really replicate it?

man", were neurobiologically sound. But to a significant extent that's because of the natural plasticity of the brain: religious practice and catechising affect the physical make-up of the brain – the neural connections that determine to a large extent what we are. If I beat my child, or make him genuflect before the Virgin, I'll produce changes in his brain that will last a lot longer, and will be much more significant, than the bruises on his buttocks or his knees.

DO THE REDUCTIONISTS WIN?

All this sounds like a reductionist's manifesto. But it's not.

Yes, we can show that things are going on in our bodies when we have 'spiritual experiences'. But so what? Remember the Judæo-Christian contention: bodies and spirits are intimately connected. Surely, we'd expect something to be going on in our bodies when something is going on in our spirits? To show a *correlation* between brain activity and a particular spiritual experience doesn't begin to indicate *causation* – let alone *identity*.

In observing the common ground between 'genuine' spiritual experience and those generated by drugs and extreme practices, there's a tendency to overstate the commonality. While 'genuine' experiences are fairly uniform, drug-related experiences (for instance) are not. Ayahuasca ushers you into a green, writhing, humid, botanical world, while the active ingredient of ayahuasca, DMT (which is similar to the naturally occurring neurotransmitters serotonin and melatonin) takes you to the linear, geometrical world of *The Matrix Reloaded*.

There's also a romantic tendency in the drug literature to overstate the incidence of the good trips. In fact, some horrible things happen. In the 1990s, psychologist Rick Strassman did work on 60 healthy volunteers taking DMT. Some reported the sort of thing that you find in the great religious classics – floating on a sea of bliss, going through the spiralling tunnel towards the light, and so on. But some horrible things happened too. Nearly half of the subjects met weird creatures: elves, giant insects, giants and humanoid robots. Some were threatened and subjected to agonising experiments. One was even buggered by dinosaur-like creatures. The results were so disturbing that the study had to be stopped.

The reductionists tend, too, to overstate the degree of overlap between these artificially induced experiences and 'genuine' experiences. Quite often, on drugs (for instance), you do get the '*advaita*' experience of dissolution of the self. Those experiences are reported in and prized by the religions of the East, but they are vanishingly rare. Only the really top-notch ascetic yogis get them regularly – and very possibly for biochemical reasons similar to those reproduced by drugs. The most intense religious experiences of most of us are not dissolutions at all: they are *enhancements* of ourselves, and personal encounters with another. We are more truly ourselves – not less – when we are having them. And, importantly, although religion can do some terrible things, the spiritual experiences induced by mainstream religious traditions seem to do only good. They don't give you a bad trip. You might get abused in the vestry by a lascivious priest, but you won't be buggered by dinosaurs.

Summarising: The main types of spiritual experiences are reported by adherents of all religions, including atheistic humanism. Most spiritual experiences have a neurological correlate which, in embodied animals like us, is precisely what you'd expect. Attempts to generate these experiences using drugs or extreme physiological techniques are not consistently successful, but nevertheless the partial successes suggest that drugs (*etc.*) work through at least some of the neural and biochemical pathways used by 'genuine' spiritual experience. The casualties *en route*, however, suggest that the pathways aren't meant to be used that way. This raises the intriguing question: What are they meant to be used for? And surely there is at least a suspicion that they're there because we're meant to communicate with something other than the other side of our hemispheres. FT

... to be continued

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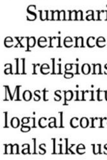

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Cryptoscatology

ROBERT GUFFEY explores the hidden links between Charles Fort and André Breton and argues that their work at the margins of consensus reality was united by a subversive, synchronistic and surrealist practice that continues to resonate to this day.

In 1919, a "meaningful coincidence" occurred: Charles Fort published *The Book of the Damned* and the surrealist André Breton (right) founded an anti-literary review titled *Littérature*. The work of both men would eventually inspire large groups of artists, philosophers, and other strange people to follow in their respective footsteps. In Breton's case, this is exactly the result he had been striving toward. Fort, on the other hand, couldn't have cared less. Nevertheless, it's interesting to note that both men – one in Europe, the other in America – were eagerly exploring the hidden realm of dreams, unexplained phenomena, and what the Swiss psychologist Jung would call "meaningful coincidences".

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It is well known that the surrealists were heavily influenced by psychology, particularly the work of Freud. Later, they would also draw upon the findings of Freud's student Jung, whose theories concerning synchronicity dovetailed with their own mystical outlook on life. Jung developed the term "synchronicity" after noticing that both he and his patients had experienced an uncanny number of coincidences that clearly went beyond the mere forces of chance (see **FT171:42–47**; **264:40–45**). For example, Jung once related the eerie incident of having suddenly woken up in the middle of the night convinced that someone had just entered his hotel room, only to find himself alone in the dark. He was certain he had been roused forth by "a feeling of dull pain as if something had struck his forehead and the back of his skull", and yet there was no evidence of physical harm anywhere on his body. The mystery deepened the very next day when he discovered that not only had a patient of his shot himself through the forehead, but that the bullet had "lodged at the back wall of the skull". Inevitably, the time of the tragedy coincided with Jung's fearful experience from the night before.[1]

Fort and Breton were both eagerly exploring dreams and coincidences

Breton recorded similar experiences in his book *Nadja*. One night, while speaking to Picasso during the intermission of Apollinaire's *Couleur du Temps*, he was approached by a young man who "stammers a few words, and finally manages to explain that he had mistaken me for one of his friends supposedly killed in the war. Naturally, nothing more was said. A few days later, through a mutual friend, I begin corresponding with [the French poet] Paul Éluard, whom I did not know by sight. On furlough, he comes to see me: I am in the presence of the same person as at *Couleur du Temps*."[2]

Worthless facts, petrifying coincidences

This striking example of synchronicity is preceded by a monologue that would not be at all out of place in Fort's *Book of the Damned*. Not only is the intellectual content similar, but the paradoxically convoluted and poetic style of the prose is also reminiscent of Fort's. Breton speaks about being interested in relating the events of his life only insofar as they are "at the mercy of chance… temporarily escaping my control, admitting me to an almost forbidden world of sudden parallels, petrifying coincidences, and reflexes peculiar to each individual, of harmonies struck as though on the piano, flashes of light that would make you see, really *see*, if only they were not so much quicker than all the rest."[3]

The facts that most interest Breton, he says, are of an "absolutely unexpected, violently fortuitous character". Furthermore, they are "of quite unverifiable intrinsic value".

Such "worthless" facts and "petrifying coincidences" were the core of both Fort's private and professional life. He swam in an endless river of dreams and damned things, all of which he preserved in his four iconoclastic books. Over the course of 1,062 pages (I refer to the one-volume *Books of Charles Fort*), Fort drops his bait into this forbidden river and invariably raises strangeness after strangeness, performing exploratory surgery upon each after he's captured them on the page. Many of them contain echoes of the experiences related by Jung and Breton. Like the latter, Fort would not call them mere coincidences: "In the explanation of *coincidence* there is much of laziness, and helplessness, and response to an instinctive fear that a scientific dogma will be endangered. It is a tag, or a label…"[4] Fort follows this passage by relating the story of a glass-eyed man named Jackson who was wanted by the police. The police managed to arrest a glass-eyed Jackson in Boston. To their dismay, however, he wasn't the correct glass-eyed Jackson. They eventually found *their* Jackson in Philadelphia. For a moment, Fort ruminates over the possibility of universal symmetry: that if there's a Murphy with a hare lip in Chicago, there must be another hare-lipped Murphy somewhere else. As usual with Fort, just as soon as he proposes an idea he rejects it as being too tidy.

He spends the next two pages listing a series of incidents clipped out of American and British newspapers from the years 1911, 1929, 1930, 1910, 1924, 1931, 1888, and 1892. Each story describes similar scenarios – scenarios that only a man with Fort's unique sense of pattern recognition could latch onto. In one story, two dead men were found in the desert only 100 yards from each other, and yet the authorities claimed "there was no connection between the two deaths".[5] A separate story reported the discovery of a man, dead of heart failure, sitting on a park bench in the Bronx. Soon afterwards, another dead man was found sitting on a bench nearby. Still another story told of two women found dead in the same river. They had no relation to each other, lived on opposite sides of the town, and both left their respective houses at 10 o'clock in the morning exactly two days before their bodies were found. Still another story describes the execution of three men "for the murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey, on Greenberry Hill, London". This wouldn't be unusual except for the fact that the murderers were named Green, Berry, and Hill. With fastidious documentation, Fort continues to relate proto-synchronicities like these until he comes to the following Breton-like conclusion: "There is a view by which it can be shown, or more or less demonstrated, that there never has been a coincidence. That is, in anything like a final sense. By a coincidence is meant a false appearance, or suggestion, of relations among circumstances. But anybody who accepts that there is an underlying oneness of all things, accepts that there are no utter absences of relations among circumstances – Or that there are no coincidences, in the sense that there are no real discords in either colors or musical notes – That any two colors, or sounds, can be harmonized, by intermediately relating them to other colors, or sounds."[6]

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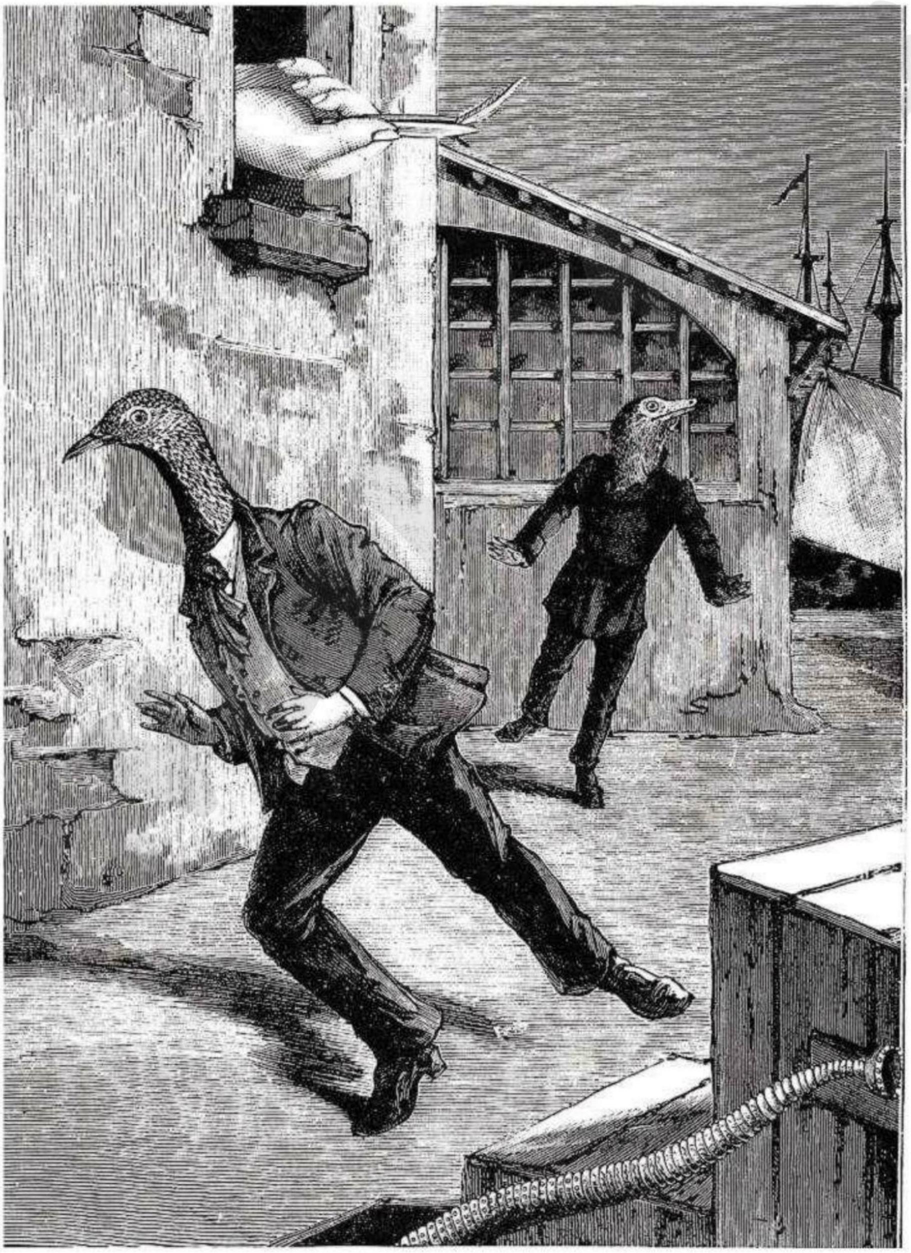


ABOVE: Breton (rear, left) met poet Paul Éluard (front, right) in a typically "meaningful coincidence".
LEFT: Dada and surrealist art embraced synchronicities and strange conjunctions, as in the collages of Max Ernst.

James Joyce, author of what is arguably the ultimate fortean novel, *Finnegans Wake*, created his own term to describe these events: "coincidance". Indeed, such pattern-recognition as exhibited by Fort often involves an unconscious dance between the observer and the phenomenon observed. Perhaps these synchronicities grow out of a human desire to fill in the blank spaces of life, to find connections where there are none, to reconstruct reality to our own satisfaction.

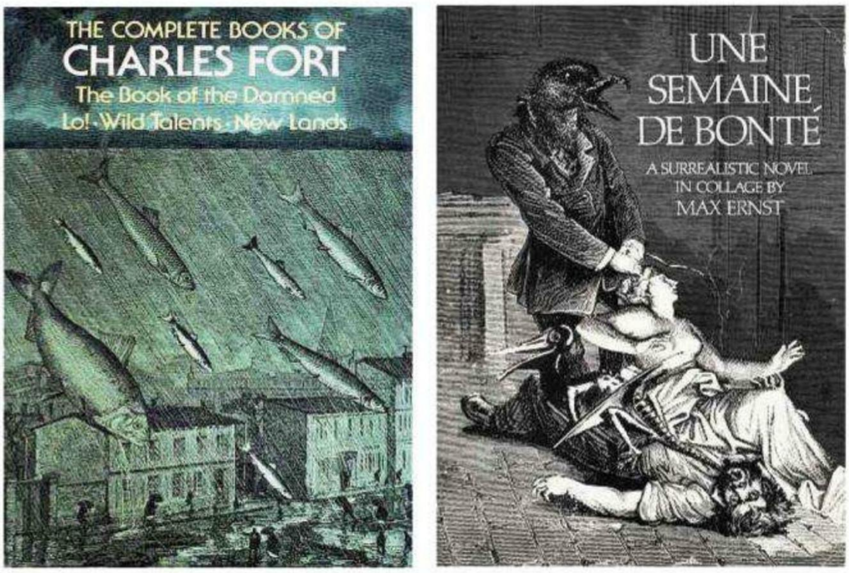
After all, is this not the goal of any surrealist? "This landscape is not good enough for me," the surrealist declares. "I think I shall include a giant fried egg with a horde of burning midgets on top just to liven it up a bit!" And impetuously, without thinking of the consequences, he does just that, for to do otherwise would be a living death.

Transformations, conscious and otherwise

While a surrealist consciously transforms the world, perhaps Charles Fort performed the same act unconsciously. Wanting a stranger world than the one in which he was forced to live, he went out and found just that between the dusty covers of bound newspapers yellowing with age and neglect. He found wild coincidences; frogs that fell out of the skies; reports going back to 1779 of "vast wheel-like super-constructions" that "enter this earth's atmosphere" long before such reports became the subject of weekly tabloids; battalions of phantom soldiers; vanishing planets; blue ancient Britons; gravesites the size of marbles belonging to a race of tiny beings who crucified cockroaches; two gigantic crows who perched upon the Moon on the evening of 3 July 1882; a mouse who in the year 1930 was heard to say, "I was along this way, and thought I'd drop in", then vanished along a trail of purple sparkles; mysterious beings who collect Ambroses; periwinkles that teleport from one side of the Earth to the other; Suns that briefly turn green; the unwavering certainty that the Moon is not only 35 miles (56km) away, but also easily accessible by balloon; and cobwebs that threaten to cover the Earth. This, of course, is only a sample of Fort's *œuvre.* Like an alchemist, he was able to take base materials – turgid volumes of recent and not-so-recent history – and reshape them into pure strangeness, or gold by any other name. Max Ernst exhibited the same talent in his surrealist collages, in which he connected unrelated elements into what were often familiar landscapes, populating them with unexpected hybrids and alien creatures. If Ernst did this consciously and Fort unconsciously, in the end it doesn't matter. Any self-respecting alchemist would be proud of either result.

Tony "Doc" Shiels, a surrealist magician, painter, Punch and Judy professor, and all around roustabout of some note, has applied the term "surrealchemy" to his fortean investigations in Cornwall, where he claims to have invoked a suspiciously Ernstian entity named Owlman. Sightings of the fine-feathered dæmon were reported by numerous residents of Cornwall, all of them independently of each other. In 1976, one witness was reported as saying, "It was like a big owl with pointed ears, as big as a man. The eyes were red and glowing. At first I thought it was someone dressed up, playing a joke, trying to scare us. I laughed at it, we both did, then it went up in the air and we both screamed. When it went up you could see its feet were like pincers." [7]

Strangely, Ernst visited the Hellford River area of Cornwall – the exact location where Owlman was seen – back in the 1930s with a "Celtic witch-woman". This was Leonora Carrington, a prolific painter and novelist, and until recently one of the last living surrealists. She died of pneumonia in Mexico City on 25 May 2011 at the age of 94. Of course, anyone familiar with Ernst and his work will know that he had a penchant for drawing entities with avian features. In fact, his androgynous alter ego Loplop has a decidedly bird-like head. Furthermore, the year during which the Owlman sightings occurred also happened to be the year of Ernst's death. One might say that the preceding titbits are merely examples of the infamous "coincidences" we've already heard so much about. However, a more surreal-minded person might propose that the intense creative energy given off by Ernst's mind during his stay in Cornwall manifested a thought form into the physical world, and that it took the added energy released upon the artist's death to make this "psychic marionette" fully visible to normal human beings. The Tibetans call such phantoms *tulpas.*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CHARLES FORT
The Book of the Damned
Lo! · Wild Talents · New Lands
UNE SEMAINE DE BONTÉ
A SURREALISTIC NOVEL IN COLLAGE BY MAX ERNST

ABOVE: Do the the Dover editions of works by Fort and Ernst demonstrate a shared sensibility, even a methodology, at work?

Though this may sound like pseudo-scientific mumbo-jumbo, Jung had a similar theory concerning flying saucers. In his book *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky*, he proposed that flying saucers were actually physical manifestations of the collective unconscious – symbols of nuclear age anxiety and the recurring hope of salvation from above – given life simply by our overwhelming need for them. If that's not surrealism, then nothing is.

To the literal-minded, this may *still* sound like pseudo-scientific mumbo-jumbo; but Jung was a psychiatrist and could get away with saying crazy things like that without being accused of having gone hi-diddle-diddle over the deep end. Crazy or not, the point is that surrealism and fortean phenomena have been intimately related ever since that first "meaningful coincidence" in 1919. Breton's similarities to Fort, Ernst's strange intersection with "Doc" Shiels, and Jung's flirtation with flying saucers suggest there's a definite relationship between Breton and Fort. Each explores the invisible zones of everyday existence via ostensibly worthless techniques – dreams, fantasies, paranormal phenomena – everything that modern Western Man considers to be mere detritus. Both Breton and Fort practised what could be called "cryptoscatology" (translation from the Latin: "the study of secret shit"). Both wish to dig deeper than consensus reality; to sift through the loam that no one else will touch; to rub the noses of the bourgeoisie into this forbidden soil; to shock "the dead sot, the slow of perception, the dignified, all sourpusses, the cursory or unobservant, some pedagogues, the timid, the gullible, and almost without exception – all persons who have their Science and Scientists from the daily newspapers", to paraphrase Tiffany Thayer's list of all those with whom *The Books of Charles Fort* would be unpopular. [8]

Finally, when both men died – Fort in 1932, Breton in 1966 – the squares from the above list immediately declared Bastille Day and decided that forteanism and surrealism were at last dead and buried along with their founders. Such premature forecasting proved thoroughly incorrect – to the great consternation of the dead sots and sourpusses. The proof that neither movement is dead lies in the fact that their core principles and ideas are still being written about and discussed decades after the original founders have long been devoured by the larvæ of dipterous flies and other wonderfully ravenous creatures. FT

Extracted from *Cryptoscatology: Conspiracy as Art Form*, to be published by Trine Day (www.trineday.com) later this year.

NOTES

1 Stuart Holroyd: *Magic, Words, and Numbers*, Danbury Press, 1975, pp11–14.

2 André Breton: *Nadja*, Grove Weidenfeld, 1960, pp24–27.

3 *Ibid.*, p19.

4 Charles Fort: *The Books of Charles Fort*, Henry Holt, 1957, p847.

5 *Ibid.*, p848.

6 *Ibid.*, pp849–50.

7 Tony 'Doc' Shiels: *Monstrum: A Wizard's Tale,* Fortean Tomes, 1990, p58.See also **FT16:19**; **17:16–19**.

8 Fort, *op. cit.*, xiv.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

ROBERT GUFFEY is a freelance writer who has published short stories and non-fiction articles. His new book is *Cryptoscatology: Conspiracy as Art Form*. He resides in the southwest USA and is married with two kids and a menagerie.

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Shape-shifting ghosts

SD TUCKER wonders what happened to the old tradition of 'multi-form apparitions' in the West, but takes heart from their continued existence in other parts of the globe.

SD TUCKER is a writer based in the Merseyside area. His latest book, provisionally-titled *Haunted Merseyside*, will be published by Amberley later this year.

In April 2011, reports of a strange 'monster' – dubbed 'Bawokozi' (**FT277:10**) – plaguing the small town of Steytlerville in South Africa began appearing in that country's press. Essentially, the main characteristic of this 'beast' – or spirit, perhaps – was its apparent ability to constantly change shape. According to a local police officer, Zandisile Nelani, two men were walking near a tavern when they saw another man wearing a black jacket. One of the men, Nozipho, went up and asked the stranger, "What is your problem?" When he did not respond, Nozipho realised that the man had no head. After this, he then transformed himself into a dog, which was "as big as a cow" and "very angry".

After Nozipho and his friend ran away, the monster then turned on another group of people walking down the same road; they, however, claimed that it turned itself into a "big monkey" and then vanished. Further reports of its shape-shifting nature soon began to flood in to the police; one man said that it changed from a man wearing a suit into a pig, and then a bat. Perhaps because of this latter form, people then began saying that the creature could fly. Supposedly, when a photograph was taken of it resting under a tree in human form, it showed an "unknown animal" instead.[1]

It would be easy to laugh at this tale, and no doubt certain elements of it, such as the bit about the photograph, are mere rumours. Our main objection to the scare, however, would no doubt be the thing's magical shape-shifting abilities. When we in the West see strange entities and apparitions, they tend to just stick to the one basic form… don't they?

ABOVE: Steytlerville, South Africa, home to a shape-shifting apparition.

The short answer would be "They do now, but they didn't always." Since around the end of the 19th century, when psychical research began to be codified with the work of organisations like the Society for Psychical Research, and popular books, stage plays and, later, films and TV shows featuring ghosts began to appear, the popular idea of what a spirit should look like has become stabilised in the West, and we no longer get such weird freaks as the Steytlerville monster appearing to us. Nowadays, if you see a ghost, it's likely to be human in form, or else some kind of glowing shape or light. Westerners in the past, however, had many more apparitional options open to them.

For example, a tale is told of how a tailor riding home to Ampleforth in Yorkshire one night in the late 1300s came across a raven emitting sparks from its body; the bird promptly transformed itself into a dog. After the tailor asked it, in the name of the Holy Trinity, to reveal its true name and nature to him, it turned into a dead man, whose innards and intestines were visible as he spoke. The tailor encountered the same spirit on another night, initially in the form of a goat and then of a "horribly thin man".[2] Another mediæval ghost, meanwhile, appeared to its witness initially as a horse, then as "a whirling heap of hay with a light in the midst of it" before finally turning into another dead man.[3]

Such 'multi-form apparitions', as they are sometimes termed, seem incomprehensible to us in the West now, and it would be easy, perhaps, to dismiss them as fictional. However, there are numerous instances of such apparitions being seen during poltergeist hauntings involving named and reliable witnesses from Europe and America in the more recent past. At Sandfeldt, Germany, in 1722, for example, a group of children saw the same ghost appear as, variously, a plague of cats running around the house, a giant yellow dog with eyes as big as the children's heads, the nose of a cow and three of its legs, a cavalcade of shaggy things like calves being chased from a shed by a man with a whip, an angel, a race of "little crooked people" living underground, and a small woman who stole a pancake from one of them.[4] At a house on Russian Hill, overlooking San Francisco Bay, in 1856, a ghost first appeared to various witnesses as a half-human 'goblin', "of gigantic height and frightfully lean", with a face which was "hideously long, thin and distorted", then as a pleasant-looking girl of about 12, then as a shadowy giant which melted in and out of a solid wall repeatedly, and finally as a glowing light which changed its shape innumerable times before settling ultimately into "the shape of a long grave, about six feet [1.8m] in length, and close to the ground " before disappearing.[5]

So why do we Westerners no longer see things like this, if our ancestors did and other people elsewhere around the world still do? Probably it is because, due to the modernising influences already mentioned, our notion of what a 'ghost' is has shifted over the past 150 years. Now, a ghost is viewed very definitely as being the spirit of a dead person, whereas, in the past, it might have been thought of as being an amalgamation of fairy, demon and nature-spirit as well – something much less clear-cut, with a number of potential forms. Our ancestors, I think, had more imagination, and much the more entertaining ghosts. FT

NOTES

[1] http://n24.cm/fsI6C8; http://n24.cm/fsI6C8 (both news24.com); *FT* will be examining the Steytlerville shape-shifter in detail in a future issue.

[2] RC Finucane: *Ghosts: Appearances of the Dead and Cultural Transformation*, Prometheus Books, 1996, pp63–64.

[3] Finucane, *op. cit.*, pp66–67.

[4] Alan Gauld & AD Cornell: *Poltergeists*, Routledge Kegan-Paul, 1979, pp111–115.

[5] Emma Hardinge Britten: *Modern American Spiritualism*, Kessinger Publishing Co., 2003.

Death on the thirteenth floor

MIKITA BROTTMAN investigates a mysterious death that was – quite literally – a little too close to home...

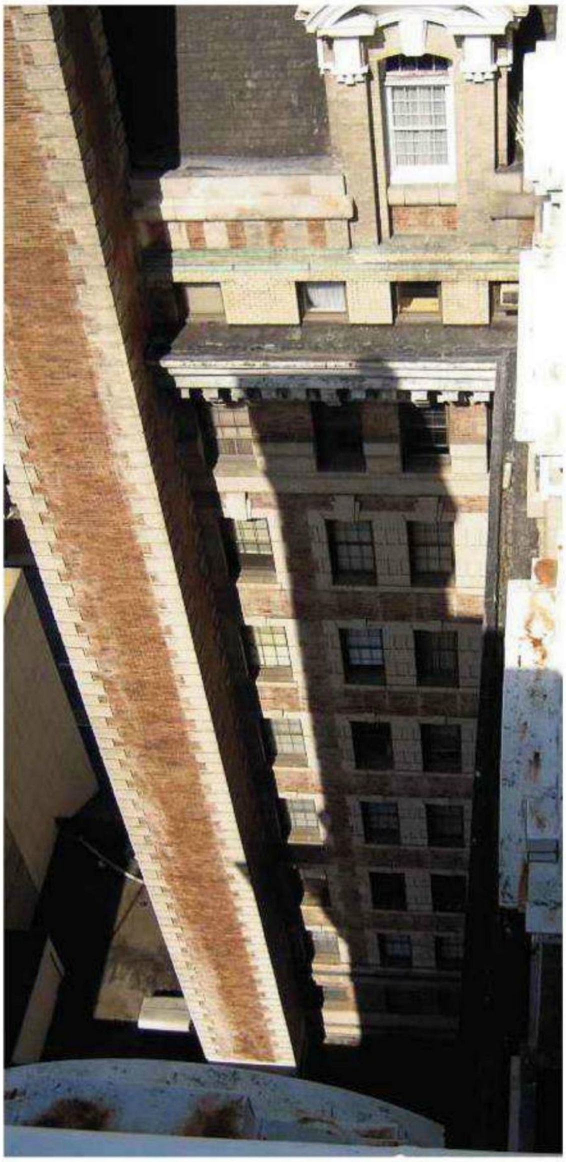
MIKITA BROTTMAN is an author, critic, psychoanalyst and humanities lecturer at Maryland College of Art, Baltimore. Her most recent book is *Phantoms of the Clinic* (Karnac, 2011).

On 16 May 2006, my partner David and I were getting ready for bed. It was around 10 in the evening, maybe 10.30. Suddenly, we heard a crash outside, loud enough to make the windows shake in their frames. It sounded like a head-on collision. We looked out over the street but, noticing nothing unusual, we quickly dismissed the sound as just another of those unexplained noises in the night.

We live on the fifth floor of the Belvedere, an old hotel in Baltimore that dates back to 1903. The building stands on the intersection of two busy streets in the middle of Mount Vernon, a district with plenty of bars and restaurants that can be noisy at weekends, but this was a Tuesday night, and the streets were quiet.

Nine days later, on Wednesday 25 May, the Belvedere's main concierge, Gary Shivers, went to follow up on a tenant's complaint about a "terrible smell". The odour was coming from a disused office building in the second-floor annexe, a modern extension that had been added to the old hotel at a later date. Entering the office, Gary saw something he would never forget. "I'll never get that image out of my head," he told me the following day. It was a dead body, just starting to decompose, that had crashed through the second-floor annexe, presumably from the roof of the 13-storey building. Horrified, Gary ran across the road to the hair salon, where he took a stiff shot of whiskey and called the police.

Within an hour, the hotel was cordoned off and officers were swarming all over. As soon as I learned what had happened, I went to the window of our fifth-floor apartment, which overlooks the second-floor annexe. Leaning out, I saw three policemen climbing around the roof; I also saw the hole that the body had made, and two cast-off flip-flops lying yards apart. The hole, which made me recall the crash we'd heard the week before, seemed remarkably small. It was about 2ft (60cm) in diameter and almost circular, not one of those people-shaped holes you see in cartoons.



ABOVE: The rear of the Belvedere Hotel, showing the drop from the 13th floor.

MIKITA BROTTMANN

Rey's death involved a number of Masonic elements

Later in the evening, after the police had gone and things were back to normal, I went down to the room where the body had been found. I thought the police would have sealed it, or at least locked the door, and was surprised to find it propped open, obviously to get rid of the smell. From below, the hole in the annexe roof was much bigger than it had seemed from above. Some of the rafters and roofing material had fallen on the floor. The carpet underneath the hole was stained black and scattered with what appeared to be grains of rice, but on closer examination turned out to be dried maggots. While I was there, two girls who worked in the nightclub on the 13th floor came by, gagging theatrically and holding their noses. It didn't smell all that bad to me – someone had sprayed air freshener around – but they seemed to find it overpowering. One of the girls told me she'd seen a corpse once before, and she recognised the smell right away. "You never forget the smell of a dead body," she said.

The body, it turned out, was that of a man – a 32-year-old financial writer named Rey Rivera. He'd been reported missing a week earlier; I'd noticed his image plastered on posters all over the neighbourhood – a strikingly tall, handsome man, 6ft 5in (2m) tall and 260lb (18½ stone / 118kg). He was last seen on Tuesday 16 May, when he'd been working in his office at home. His wife of six months, Allison, was out of town on business; her friend Claudia had been staying with the Riveras as a houseguest. Around 6 o'clock that evening, she heard Rey's phone ring. After a brief conversation, she reported, he left the house abruptly, leaving the lights on and his computer running. All he took with him was his cell phone and $20 in cash – no bag, no wallet, nothing else. He was dressed in a light jacket, shorts and brown flip-flops. He didn't even stop long enough to put in the removable brace he wore all the time to straighten his teeth. In other words, he left as though he'd be coming right back.

According to the autopsy, when his body was found, Rey Rivera had been dead for at least a week, and his injuries were consistent with a fall from the 13th floor. As far as the medical examiner could tell after nine days of decomposition, there were no signs of a struggle, no evidence of foul play; nothing to suggest this death was anything other than a suicide. Toxicology tests found no alcohol or drugs in his system, and when the press reported that Rivera's wife had turned a "suicide note" over to the police, the case was considered closed.

Yet nobody, neither the Baltimore police nor the FBI, believed the cryptic letter Allison Rivera turned over to the police was a "suicide note". This communication was typed in small print, accompanied by a blank cheque, folded in plastic and taped to the screen of Rivera's computer. It was addressed to "brothers and sisters", referred to "a well-played game", and began and ended with the phrase "Whom virtue unites, death cannot separate". These four pages of odd ramblings included references to Christopher Reeve, Stanley Kubrick, Portable Data Assistants, Flash Drives, The Human Genome, Genetic Engineering, Sudoku, Viagra-type drugs, The Fuel Cell, Bluetooth, and Overnight Express Shipping. It also contained a long list of people Rivera knew and was related to, with a request to make them (and himself) "five years younger".

FBI behavioural experts could not provide any conclusive information about this bizarre missive, except that it was definitely not a suicide note. Allison Rivera went through all her husband's journals, diaries and computer files, and found nothing unusual or indicating Rey was suicidal. Moreover, the Riveras had recently made the decision to move to Los Angeles, where Rey was planning to pitch a screenplay he'd just completed, and where the couple planned to start a family. Finally, just hours before Rivera disappeared, he'd made a phone call to a local video company to reserve an editing suite for the weekend. This hardly seems like the last act of a man about to jump off a 13-storey building.

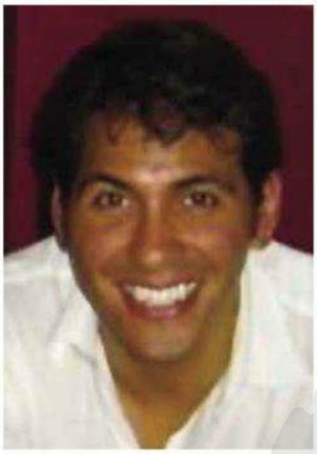
Still, in the two months before his death, according to his wife, Rivera had been behaving in uncharacteristic ways. He had started to seem paranoid, insisting he accompany Allison everywhere, even when she went jogging. The week before his death, the burglar alarm in Rey and Allison's Northwood home had been going off for no reason in the middle of the night, and each time it happened, Rey would leap out of bed, terrified. Allison recalls seeing fear in his eyes for the first time ever. "Rey was scared," she said. "He's a big Latin guy and he's macho. It wasn't him."

One of the names mentioned more than once in the letter taped to Rey's computer was that of his old school friend and current employer, Frank Porter Stansberry. Before he married Allison, Rivera had been living in Los Angeles, where he was working on a burgeoning career as a screenwriter. He moved to Baltimore at the urging of Stansberry, one of the directors of Agora, a "holding company" for publishers of financial newsletters, who hired him to edit a publication called the "Rebound Report", which gave advice on stock investment. The job made Rivera plenty of money – enough to buy Allison a ring and for the couple to enjoy a Florida beach wedding just a few months before Rey's mysterious death – but family and friends said he'd been unhappy at Agora and had recently stopped working there full-time while he prepared for the move to LA.

Those investigating Rivera's death soon discovered that his childhood friend Stansberry had a reputation as a right wing, anti-government commentator, and that in 2003, three years before Rivera's death, the Federal Securities and Exchange Commission had filed a complaint against Agora, claiming it "defrauded readers by charging $1,000 for false insider information".[1] Agora was cleared, but in August 2007, Stansberry was ordered to pay $1.5 million in restitution and civil penalties. Agora, meanwhile, has gone from strength to strength; today, the company occupies eight buildings in the Mount Vernon area, not far from the Belvedere Hotel.

Confounding the mystery further, Rivera's death involved a number of obscure Masonic elements, one of these being the unusual phrase beginning and ending the note found taped to his computer: "Whom virtue unites, death cannot separate." In its Latin form, this phrase was used in ceremonies performed by the Knights Templar, and it is still inscribed on the inside of Masonic rings. Rivera's family and friends recall that, in the time leading up to his death, he had become increasingly fascinated by Masonic secrets.

According to his wife, Rivera spent the weekend before his disappearance reading Joseph Fort Newton's 1914 book *The Builders*, which connects the origins of Freemasonry with ancient Egypt, the early mystery religions, and mediæval stonemasons.



ABOVE: Rey Rivera, looking far from suicidal in this photograph.

On the day of his disappearance, Tuesday 16 May, he had a meeting with a member of a Maryland Freemason's lodge about the possibility of joining. The lodge member he spoke to recalled there was nothing unusual about the conversation, describing it as typical of someone who wanted to learn about membership. However, said Baltimore Police Commissioner Frederick H Bealefeld III, Rivera's interest was not in doing charitable work, but was "linked to his interest in the movie industry and this theory that somehow there was control being exerted by the Masonic order." Significantly, Rivera's last purchase, on the day of his death, was the book *Freemasons for Dummies*.

Other mysteries surrounding the case remain unsolved. For one thing, Rivera's cell phone was discovered on the second-floor annexe roof, perfectly functional and intact. When asked if this was possible, former Baltimore Police Commander Mel Blizzard, who reviewed evidence in the case, said: "It's possible. I just find it to be highly unlikely." Secondly, although the hotel has an extensive security camera network, videos of the day in question were "not available", as the equipment apparently "malfunctioned". Thirdly, the hole in the roof was about 40ft (12m) out from the edge of the 13th floor, which would suggest that whoever fell through the roof would have needed a running start, especially as a man of Rivera's height and weight would surely have fallen heavily. "There's no way he could jump out that far," said a Belvedere employee. "I don't see how a man that size could have jumped out a window either." It is also well known that Rivera had a fear of heights. "Injuries at the time of the autopsy were consistent with the fall from a height," wrote Medical Examiner Melissa Brassell, in her May 2006 autopsy report. "Because the circumstances surrounding the incident are unclear, and it is not known how the deceased came to have precipitated from such a height, the manner of the death is best classified as undetermined".

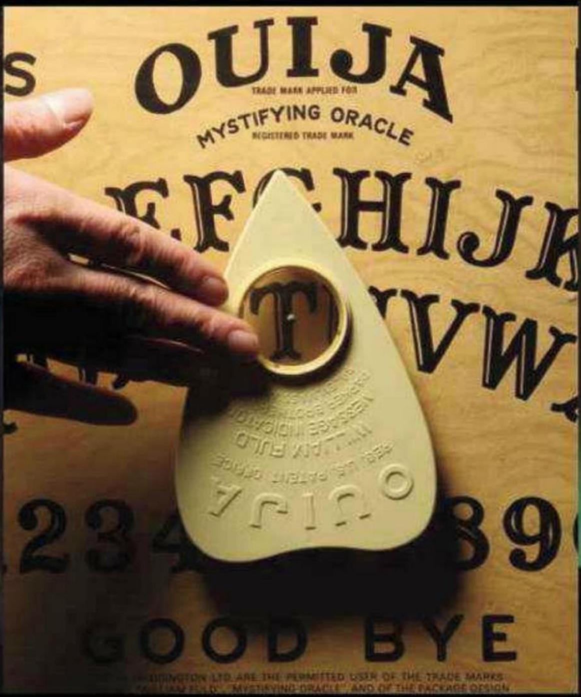
In all probability, we will never know what happened to Rey Rivera on the 13th floor. Certainly, it is not impossible that he committed suicide. But if you consider the particular manner in which he died and the context of his life, marriage, and plans for the future, suicide, in the end, is the least likely option of all. FT

NOTES

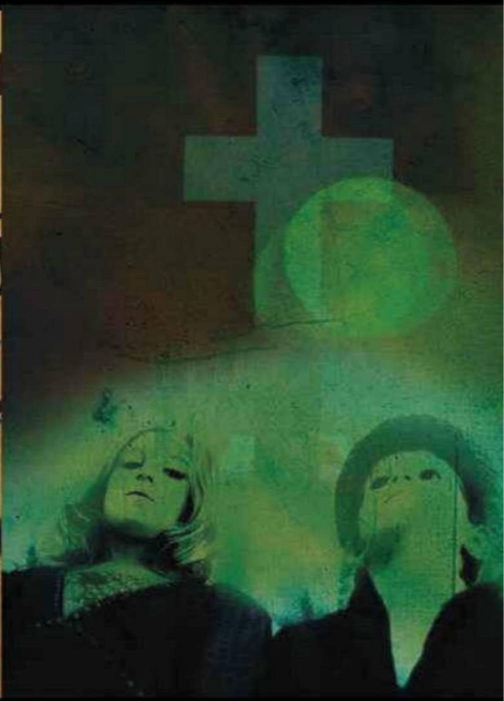
[1] http://1.usa.gov/eLochB (sec.gov).

More tales of the unexpected...

The faceless figure that stepped out of the fog



The ouija session that summoned a shadow man



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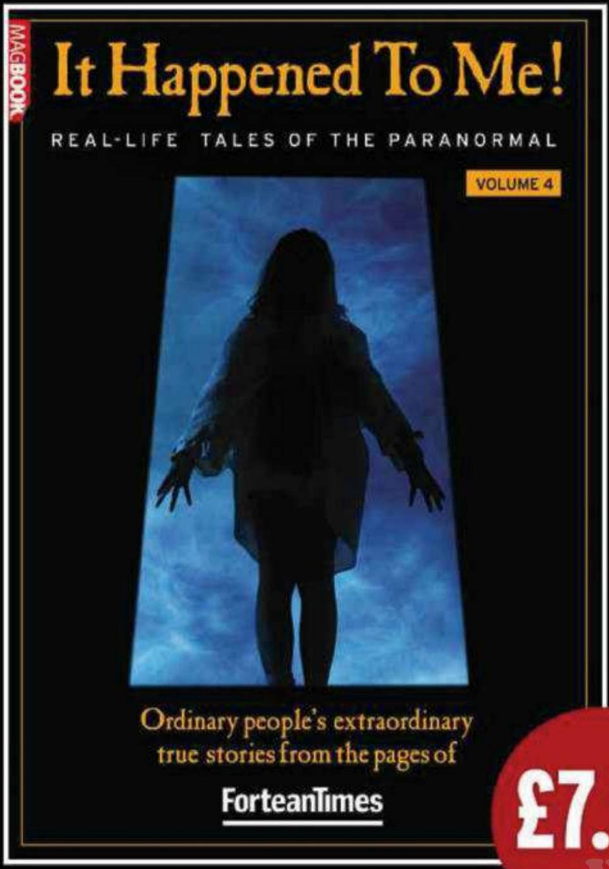

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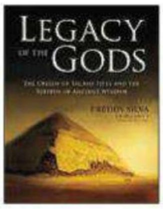
Assumptions ain't the truth

The search for a form of ancient wisdom that can be recovered and used on our spiritual path won't be aided by dodgy etymology and industrial quantities of intuition



Legacy of the Gods

The Origins of Sacred Sites and the Rebirth of Ancient Wisdom

Freddy Silva

Hampton Roads 2011

Pb, 319pp, illus, notes, ind, $24.95, ISBN 9781571746672

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £9.89

The language of the New Age has solidified into what Theodor Adorno might have called a "jargon of authenticity"; certain terms (eg, 'energy', 'spiritual', 'power', 'intuition') have transcended the mundane realms of semantics. They have become shibboleths for a default belief system, as much a way of recognising fellow travellers as an attempt at open communication. The accessible remains of ancient civilisations are core elements of the worldview propagated in this language.

These mysterious remains (mysterious, in the first place, because of our forgetful ignorance of our own history) are the loci of several distinct strands of modern curiosity: they are investigated by those who wish to understand the past on its own terms, and learn from it; they are mined for their anomalous value by those who already have a theory about the ancient world, one inconsistent with established academic views; and they are vaunted as ancient articles of an apparently new faith. This accumulation of modern wants is quite a burden for the ragged tracery of mute stones that haunts our landscapes and our imaginations.

The title of Freddy Silva's book implies several assumptions about the ancient world and its ruins: first, that 'the Gods' are responsible for both the monuments and our modern yearning for them; secondly, that 'sacred sites' have an origin (presumably discoverable); and thirdly, that there existed a form of wisdom which we can characterise in terms of its antiquity, which died, and which we can resuscitate (exhume).

There are problems inherent in these assumptions. The people who built and used some ancient temples worshipped gods and referenced them in the iconography of their monuments, but it is not clear that complexes such as Stonehenge, Carnac, or the vast proliferation of sites worldwide that appear similar in design and intent, are dedicated to any gods. As for origins, the more we look for ancient sites of interest, the more we find; and as our techniques for calibrating the age of these monuments develop, they recede farther and farther into the past, resisting all of our attempts to discover their origins.

The third assumption is vast in itself. Ancient people were wise (all of them?); their wisdom was relatively homogeneous (Silva might prefer the term 'universal'); their wisdom is identifiable – we can recover it and use it on our modern spiritual path. One might suppose from all this that some concrete record, a record we can all access and agree on, is available; otherwise, how would we manage to make such grandiloquent claims for a past that is otherwise silent?

> "if intuitive etymology is anything to go by, this is an enterprise relatively free of evidential value"

Language is obviously key here; perhaps if we can, as Silva and many other writers imply, identify and use a language appropriate to ancient wisdom, then perhaps there is a possible etymology of that language, which we can employ to adduce the origins of it. Etymology certainly engages Freddy Silva; he offers several examples of it in the book.

He suggests, for instance, that the term *basilica* "is derived from basilisk, a serpent, symbol of those telluric lines of force, the spirit roads"; well, not quite. Basilica means royal hall, from the Greek *basilike*, royal; basilisk is a mediæval coinage (meaning 'little king') for an imaginary creature hatched by a serpent from a cockerel's egg. He also suggests that *sorcery* is cognate with source; this sounds good and offers Silva some speculative mileage. But 'sorcery' derives from the Latin term *sors*, which means lot (as in 'drawing lots'); lots imply fate, thus sorcery implies manipulation of fate through manipulation of lots – which strikes this reviewer as a pejorative view of magic.

No doubt these are intuitive etymologies. Silva places considerable value on intuition, particularly as practised by adepts; one gets the impression that adepts are always right in their intuitions. His reliance stretches to the point where one adept can verify the intuition of another by, well, by intuition. But if intuitive etymology is anything to go by, this is an enterprise relatively free of evidential value, except to those who share the narrowly coded language of ancient wisdom reborn.

The main thesis of *Legacy of the Gods* is that temples and monuments occupy sites invested with anomalous telluric energy, enhanced by the presence of water. Silva invokes the Hartmann Grid as evidence. But if Hartmann is right, one is never more than five paces from an anomalous node of telluric energy. This might help to explain the sheer number of ancient monuments; if our universally wise ancestors wanted to map this energy, they had to build quite a number of temples. There are thousands of such sites in the UK alone.

As for water, had Silva looked at 'orthodox' archæology (or even basic geography), it might have occurred to him that water was much more present in the past; even a few centuries ago, evidence of water was overwhelming in contrast to our currently parched landscape. Thus the hidden (mysterious, spiritual) nature of water is a modern phenomenon; one which provides a convenient pool for the splashing speculations of intuitive adepts.

I am not convinced by this approach to the ancient world; I'm not convinced it *is* an approach to the ancient world. Superficial resemblance (bolstered by intuition) is not fundamental identity, however much Silva wants it to be; there is little that is ancient in the New Age.

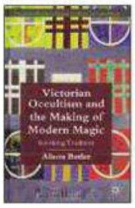
Noel Rooney

Fortean Times Verdict

WISHFUL THINKING + INTUITION + DODGY ETYMOLOGY ≠ TRUTH **0**

Dawn chorus

A secularising and scientific age also gave rise to a new school of magic



Victorian Occultism and the Making of Modern Magic

Invoking Tradition

Alison Butler

Palgrave Macmillan 2011
Hb, 240pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £55.00, ISBN 9780230223394
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £42.00

'Victorian' is synonymous with prim and proper, but beneath the stereotypes we find murder by magic, secret adepts guiding the course of human history and fantastic astral journeys. In this intellectual history of the period, Alison Butler conjures up a moment that still shapes the understanding and practice of magic.

The Victorian occultism in the title of Butler's book is, essentially, that of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. Founded in 1888, the order has been a popular subject since the pioneering work of Ellic Howe, Francis King and RA Gilbert. It has only recently begun to receive academic attention. The Golden Dawn system had an incalculable influence on the practice of magic and we are only now beginning to understand why.

Butler's premise is much like Alex Owen's in *The Place of Enchantment* (2004): how could such a scientific and secularising age produce this magical anomaly? Their conclusions, too, are similar, but where Owen finds her 'enchantment' in modernity, Butler sees her 'occultism' as being rooted in the middle class. What differentiates Butler's book is her concern for how the Golden Dawn 'revolutionised' magic.

As a school of magic – perhaps the first of its kind – the Golden Dawn changed the face of occultism. Its educational function developed not only through a set curriculum, but through the social aspects of that instruction. The model had largely been that of sorcerer and apprentice: it was now about group participation. This school-like nature led to the institutionalisation of the transmission of occult knowledge, prioritising the system over the teacher and ensuring its longevity.

In terms of theory and practice, Butler isolates a number of developments that, although not always unique to the Golden Dawn, in their combined effect produced what she sees as this revolution in magic. In an age characterised by Spiritualism, the Golden Dawn rejected intermediaries (both spirits and mediums) in favour of direct communication. The goal of magic was no longer personal gain, but spiritual improvement. The method of magic, too, found itself transformed into an exalted form of will-power. In addition, the Golden Dawn opened its doors to women as active and equal participants.

Butler has spent many years researching the Golden Dawn. Consequently, much of this book has already been published or presented at conference, but this process has allowed her to hone her arguments. There is a caveat. This book is aimed at the academic market, which makes for some dense argumentation and a hefty price tag.

The history of the Golden Dawn has been told elsewhere, but for those seeking to understand its importance, this book is a welcome addition to the debate.

Leo Ruickbie

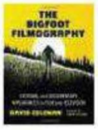
Fortean Times Verdict
AN ESSENTIAL AND ACCESSIBLE INTRODUCTION TO THE ORDER **8**

The Bigfoot Filmography

Fictional and Documentary Appearance in Film and Television

David Coleman

McFarland & Co Inc 2012
Pb, 338pp, illus, ind, $49.95, ISBN 9780786448289
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £42.00



"Here is a fascinatingly detailed look at the cinematic history of Sasquatch, from the earliest trick films of George Méliès to the most up-to-date CGI efforts", says the promo material. David Coleman's book on Bigfoot and related movies is even better than this.

The late Mark Chorvinsky wrote that "Cinema realized the fantastic, and in that sense it is intrinsically a fortean medium." Coleman points to Georges Méliès as the ciné du Sasquatch founder, with his 1912 "giant-sized animatronic Yeti monster" as its blueprint.

"In many odd ways," Coleman writes, "*Rudolph, The Red-Nosed Reindeer* [a 1964 television special] is as important to 1960s ciné du Sasquatch as any other entry except Patterson's footage of his Bluff Creek Bigfoot. [..] An entire generation of youngsters grew up with [..] an Abominable Snowman (or Snow Monster, as *Rudolph* calls it) that was at once terrifying for small children [and] comforting."

Sceptics argue that movies such as *Rudolph* (1964), *Half Human: The Story of The Abominable Snowman* (1955 in Japan; 1958 in US) and *The Legend Of Boggy Creek* (1972) inspired many to believe in Bigfoot-like beings which have no basis in reality.

For them, the start date is 1958, when Jerry Crew found 'Bigfoot' tracks in northern California. The Bigfoot motif continues up to 1987's *Harry And The Hendersons*. *7 Faces of Dr. Lao*, which was released in 1964, three years before Roger Patterson captured a creature with hair-covered breasts, clearly shows a hirsute snowwoman. (Patterson's 1968 documentary *Bigfoot: America's Abominable Snowman* is noted as the rarest of the rare Bigfoot film "as no prints, videos, or even frame enlargements are known to exist." It was shown at Don Keating's Bigfoot conference a few years back.)

The final section is devoted to interviews with Bigfoot filmmakers Ryan Schifrin, Kevin Tenny and others. This book is so exhaustively researched that one can only give it two thumbs up.

Daniel Perez

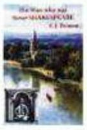
Fortean Times Verdict
A LARGER-THAN-LIFE CHARACTER IN A VERY FORTEAN MEDIUM **8**

The Man who was Never Shakespeare

The Theft of William Shakespeare's Identity

AJ Pointon

Parapress 2011
Pb, 304pp, illus, £12.00, ISBN 9781898594888
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £42.00



Those developing the orthodox myth on the flimsiest of evidence should, frankly, be shamed by Professor Pointon's formidably logical approach to the problem of identifying Shakspere of Stratford as the published Shakespeare. Three of the best alternate candidates are briefly examined, but this isn't a shoo-in for another one; it is more a rediscovery of the Stratford man's identity and an exposure of how it was co-opted. What makes this one of the most rewarding books on the Shakespeare problem is its dissection of the topsy-turvy logic grafted onto almost everything known about the man from Stratford. One is required to believe that a man without learning, letters, books or experience could be the genius who wrote Shakespeare. (Perhaps the illiterate genius gave dictation?) "The only obstacle for admitting Shakspere was not Shakespeare," Pointon states, "seems to be the emotional and other capital that has been invested in that belief for so long." As he observes, it is "no accident" that most challenges to orthodox scholarship come from outside the Anglo-American universities which have a vested interest in perpetuating the myth.

If you are even slightly intrigued by the dearth of literary evidence, the silence upon his death, the dating entanglements, or his knowledge of the then esoteric discovery of blood circulation (to give just a few examples), take care. You could well be opened to the possibility that the identity of the person who wrote under the pseudonym of Shakespeare was deliberately concealed from the first appearance of his (or her) published works and has remained elusive since, irritating as the uncertainty raised by that may be. Deal with it.

Jerry Glover

Fortean Times Verdict
GIANT-KILLINGLY RATIONAL LOOK AT THE IDENTITY PROBLEM **9**

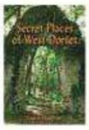
Secret Places of West Dorset

Louise Hodgson

Roving Press 2011

Pb, 144pp, illus, map, £12.95, ISBN 9781906651091

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £42.00



Every summer, tourists brave traffic jams to marvel at Dorset's Jurassic Coast. The west of the county is as lovely, but largely unvisited. This gem of a book shows how much is to be discovered west of Weymouth.

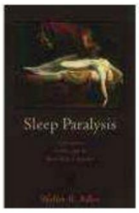
Louise Hodgson dedicates her book to John Michell, a lifelong friend: the hidden places she reveals endorse his view that there is "some intangible Mystery concealed within the landscape". West Dorset's wonders include several holy wells and a valley of sarsen stones; there are fairy hills, megaliths, a ruined miz-maze (turf maze) and a haunted hill fort. Some are atmospheric simply because they are wild and empty; others have faint traces of some lost and mysterious past. Well-written and informative, the book is beautifully illustrated with photos and the author's watercolours. There are reported sightings of alien big cats, a gigantic hare and an alleged wolf. 'Black Dogs' feature largely in Dorset folklore and for anyone foolhardy enough to want to see one, the book offers likely locations.

Steve Marshall

Fortean Times Verdict
GO WEST (OF WEYMOUTH), YOUNG MAN! **8**

Dead to the world

A sense of evil, breathing difficulties, OBEs, alien abduction, flying – welcome to the worrying world of sleep paralysis



Sleep Paralysis

Night-mares, Nocebos, and the Mind-Body Connection

Shelley R Adler

Rutgers University Press 2011

Pb, 168pp, illus, notes, refs, ind, PRICE $27.95 / £23.95, ISBN 9780813548869

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £42.00

In the early 1980s, doctors investigated a spate of deaths among Laotian Hmong men aged 25 to 50 years in the USA. All died in their sleep, yet all seemed healthy and autopsies found nothing amiss. Clinical detective work linked this 'Sudden Unexpected Nocturnal Death Syndrome (SUNDS)' with sleep paralysis, one of the most enigmatic, most misunderstood, yet most common sleep disorders.

Twenty-five to 30 per cent of the population worldwide experiences at least one attack of sleep paralysis and reports are remarkably similar across cultures and societies. Sufferers typically report a sense of evil, breathing difficulties, and sensations of floating, flying and even out-of-body experiences. As Alder points out, the traditional night-mare (with a hyphen) remains an eloquent description: "a nocturnal visit of an evil being that threatens to press the very life out of its terrified victim". An excellent chapter recounts how sleep-paralysis contributes to folklore and mythology, including the Assyrian demon Alu, Lilith and Pan.

Despite such symptomatic similarities, the way in which sufferers conceptualise the experience differs. Traditional cultures in Newfoundland speak of the 'old hag'. First-nation Arctic people in Canada refer to the *uqumangirnig* – an attack on the *tarniq*, the 'indestructible' soul, from a shaman or evil spirit. Japanese *kanashibari* attacks include visits from a female figure in white clothes with long dark hair hiding the face, reminiscent of Sadako from the *Ringu* stories. Nevertheless, the fundamental experience is ubiquitous. So, despite the fascinating differences summarised by Alder, sleep paralysis isn't a culture-bound ailment, such as *koro*, where men from southeast Asia believe their genitals are shrivelling away and will eventually disappear.

Outside shared narratives, sleep paralysis can become a disease that dare not speak its name. Sufferers may mistake the symptoms for physical or mental illness. Others interpret sleep paralysis as 'alien abductions'. Indeed, certain ufologists argue that aliens use sleep paralysis "to subdue their victims". But it's not all bad news: some people regard sleep paralysis as an opportunity to contact their soul and grow spiritually.

Most people recover fully from an attack of sleep paralysis. Nevertheless, it isn't necessarily benign. Adler links sleep paralysis to SUNDS by way of the nocebo response. As you probably know, placebos improve an ailment despite being pharmacologically inert – provided patients believe they've received an active drug. Nocebo are "placebo's evil twin". So, the nocebo effect means that patients can experience side-effects linked to the drug they believe they've taken, even though the treatment is inert. Nocebos also help explain, Alder adds, why some Chinese Americans with lung disease born in metal years (the lungs are a 'metal' organ in traditional Chinese medicine) died, on average, five years younger than those born in other years.

Recently, medical advances started to cast some light on the biology of sleep paralysis. For example, Alder highlights the link between SUNDS, sleep paralysis and Brugada syndrome, a genetic mutation that causes deadly disturbances in the heart's rhythm. Other studies suggest that the sense of a presence and related hallucinations could arise from "hypervigilant defensive states". Despite these important insights, Alder points out that treatment has advanced little since a doctor recommended in 1834 to avoid "heavy suppers" and "late hours", and keep "as cheerful… as possible".

We spend a third of our lives asleep. Yet sleep remains one of the least understood of our fundamental biological processes. For years, sleep paralysis provided a convenient catch-all for all manner of anomalous phenomena. But labelling doesn't explain – and there's a danger that sceptics' use of sleep paralysis as an explanation of the paranormal could distract attention from an inherently fascinating condition. Alder's introduction should help redress the balance.

Mark Greener

Fortean Times Verdict
THOUGHT-PROVOKING BEDTIME READING. NOW SLEEP TIGHT... **8**

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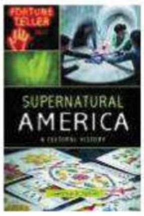
Paranormal as religion

Will *FT* – like the poor – always be with us? If paranormal beliefs are hard-wired in us, as is suggested here, quite possibly...



Supernatural America

A Cultural History

Lawrence R Samuel

Praeger Publishers Inc 2011
Hb, 217pp, notes, bib, ind, ISBN 9780313398995
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £22.49

Lawrence Samuel, founder of a company supplying consumer research to big business, has taken a break from the day job to cast a sceptical but benign eye over a broad span of weirdness, mainly in the US, but also acknowledging the major part Britain has played, and continues to play, in the field. He asks how the paranormal has pervaded popular culture, and what its ubiquity says about society. It seems odd to him that so many people are obsessed by something that does not exist when there is so much that is real in which to be interested.

He concentrates on psychic abilities, mediumship, ghosts and to a lesser extent ufology, beginning in the 1920s and ending in the present. Taking a chronological approach allows him to chart shifts of emphasis across the decades, from the bereaved obtaining consolation in the séance room to the spiritual self-help movement, with psychics as instant therapy (he quotes the superb line "there's a seeker born every minute" which riffs on the famous "there's a sucker born every minute", conflating a desire for answers with the exploitation of gullibility).

For his research he has delved into newspapers and magazines, the sorts of publications the general public read, rather than the specialised literature in which parapsychological reports are carried. He has also watched a lot of films and television. Clearly there is a lot to pack in, and he spreads himself thinly over a mere 200 pages. The result is a relaxed and useful, if not particularly deep, overview of paranormal beliefs during the last century.

Coming to the subject from the outside results in some weaknesses. The early chapters are somewhat sketchy, and prone to factual errors and inconsistencies, but he is better on recent developments, where his research is more thorough. He sometimes exaggerates, such as his charge that Sirs William Crookes, William Barrett and Oliver Lodge "subscribed to occult phenomena, showing how entrenched spiritualism was within the scientific community across the pond" [i.e. in the UK]. The fact that he only has the three names surely indicates that it wasn't. He tends to use terms such as paranormal, supernatural, spiritism, spiritualism and the occult interchangeably, ignoring differences of meaning.

His conclusion is that interest in the paranormal is increasing in significance across all social groups, and the sceptical movement seems incapable of making a noticeable dent in levels of belief. One would expect scientific progress to go hand-in-hand with a diminution of such irrationality, but he sees a symbiotic relationship between the paranormal and science, one that works more to the advantage of the former.

Why should this be?

Well, the bad news for sceptics/skeptics is that Samuel thinks that belief in the paranormal, whatever form it takes, is hardwired, a byproduct of neurobiological processes, so will be the default for most of us. It takes advantage of cognitive mechanisms which have evolved to help us understand and navigate an uncertain world. Additionally, it meets an important emotional requirement, a desire for something beyond this existence – thinking that at some fundamental level we are all connected is comforting in a hostile world. In existential terms, science, however effective at providing material progress, just isn't enough to fulfil our spiritual needs. Unlike, say, Richard Dawkins, Samuel appears sanguine, considering it an inescapable fact of life.

Far from withering away, then, the author suspects that the paranormal will always be with us and believes it could become a significant religion in the 21st century. Its success will be aided by a sense in its adherents that it possesses a profundity lacking in staid mainstream religion. Unlike religion, the paranormal is ever-mutating: when one strand is exhausted, another is ready to take its place. As this frankly far-fetched analysis indicates, Samuel tends to treat religion and the paranormal as somewhat simplistic monolithic entities, when in practice they are diverse, complex, and generally, in religion's case, robust.

Either way, the sceptics are fighting a battle they cannot win. However, if parapsychologists think that they can benefit from the situation, the author warns them that it is unlikely they will ever manage to supply evidence that will convince mainstream scientists. Parapsychology is as marginal as scepticism.

Both camps may find this conclusion depressing, but there is a bright side. At least *Fortean Times* will never want for subject matter.

Tom Ruffles

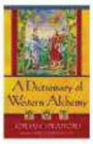
Fortean Times Verdict

A SURVEY OF THE PARANORMAL'S EVOLUTION AND PROSPECTS **7**

A Dictionary of Western Alchemy

Jordan Stratford

Quest Books 2011
Pb, 105pp, illus, notes, bib, $17.95, ISBN 9780835608978
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKCLUB PRICE £27.95



Often you can't read every word of a dictionary you are reviewing, but with 87 pages of widely-spaced entries, *A Dictionary of Western Alchemy* didn't take long.

Most explain in two or three lines alchemical equipment and terminology including elements, metals and symbolic animals and colours. A few rather short entries cover major names in the field; the author states firmly: "I remind the reader that this is a dictionary and not meant to serve as an encyclopedia."

The content is sound, though perhaps not up to the standard of Mark Haeffner's more substantial *Dictionary of Alchemy* (1991). Most of the entries deal with *What* rather than *What for* or *Why* or *How*; there is little context.

A number seem unnecessary: do we really need "Grinding – The reduction (granulation) of a substance by means of friction and pressure, most commonly with a mortar and pestle"? The sketched symbols by many of the entries, however, are useful, as are the Latin terms and derivations.

An author is not responsible for the content of the guest Foreword, but it's unfortunate that in its first paragraph (the very first words of the book), it slags off two previous writers on "the esotericisms of an earlier time", including – with no explanation – calling the late Dame Frances Yates's ground-breaking scholarly work "fascinating but lamentably flawed".

One has to suspect a personal agenda which is out of place in any dictionary, let alone in someone else's book. It strikes a sour note.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict

A DISAPPOINTINGLY SLENDER WORK **5**

ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a small selection of the dozens of books that have arrived at Fortean Towers in recent months...

GREYFRIARS BOBBY: THE MOST FAITHFUL DOG IN THE WORLD

Jan Bondeson

Amberley Publishing (amberleybooks.com) 2011
Hb, pp190, index, illus, £20.00,
ISBN: 9781445603940

The motif of the faithful dog that would not leave its master's grave was one of our late colleague John Michell's favourites, of which the eponymous Bobby is the most famous example. According to legend, he was a Skye terrier in Edinburgh who kept a graveyard vigil for 14 years until his death in 1877. His commemorative statue is visited by most tourists to the city. Bondeson's principal discovery is that the legend is a composite of three different (but successive) Bobbys, and may have developed largely by accident – a sentimental public seeing what they wanted to see. There have been many books about Greyfriars Bobby, but Jan Bondeson has a well-earned reputation for thorough research, precise documentation and good writing, which makes this the reference of choice. It is profusely and beautifully illustrated from period sources and includes a chapter on a surprising number of other stories of faithful dogs.

THE GHOST CLUB: A HISTORY

Peter Underwood

The Limbury Press (limburypress.co.uk) 2010
Pb, pp43, index, plates, £6.99
ISBN 9780956522818

The Ghost Club makes a strong claim to be the oldest society in the world dedicated to the "study and exploration of psychical and allied phenomena". This short book was written for what would have been the Club's 150th anniversary, and there can be no better guide to its venerable history than Peter Underwood, who was its president between 1960 and 1993.

The original Ghost Club was founded as a 'gentleman's club' in 1851 and flourished for just 11 years. There have been several more enduring incarnations: 1882–1936, 1938–1947 and 1954–1993. During these periods, club membership included many of the great names and pioneers of psychical research, from Sir William Crookes, FW Myers and Alfred Russel Wallace to Harry Price, Paul Tabori and Julian Huxley to Colin Wilson and Alan Wesencraft (of the Harry Price Library), and many other names well known to us as contributors to *FT*. In 1993, a serious rift between members saw the resignation of Underwood, followed by that of around 80 per cent of the old membership; however, the remainder continue with a new incarnation today, expanding their remit towards UFOs and forteana.

This slim and well illustrated volume draws on Underwood's private files to provide a unique history of a rather remarkable and diverse society that celebrated its subject with dinners, conferences and special events at which the speakers were often the top intellectuals of their day.

THE HAUNTING OF AMERICA: FROM THE SALEM WITCH TRIALS TO HARRY HOUDINI

William J Birnes & Joel Martin

Tor (tor-forge.com) 2011
Pb, pp497, index, bib, notes, $8.99
ISBN 9780765352538

Two seasoned interpreters of paranormal phenomena present their overview of "America's fascination with ghosts, goblins and demons". This is a lively book that throws in some good references but covers only the main popular topics in any depth. The authors argue from a belief in the reality of the narratives they cite, which appears to put their wide-ranging discussion of possession, religious apparitions and miracles, vivid dreams, and encounters with aliens and demons, on a parity with their belief in God and UFOs. It's a breathless romp, but a surprisingly well-informed one. It is a bold statement about paranormality as seen through the prism of largely New Age teachings, but generally preaches to believers; otherwise apart from some cases and references, there's little new here.

ROSWELL USA

John LeMay

ABC Publishing (abc-publishing-group.co.uk) 2010
Pb, pp248, index, bib, illus, £9.99,
ISBN 9780981759753

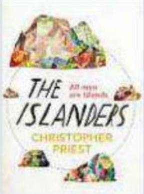
The author was born and raised in Roswell, the town synonymous with UFO crashes and cover-ups, and provides a unique insight into the way the key 1947 incident with its iconic aliens has been adopted and exploited by the New Mexican town. Yet, growing up, LeMay says he was less aware of this legend and more interested in cryptozoology and from out of that came his interest in the ufology and forteana of the state. His well illustrated and pleasantly personal take on Roswell and other towns that celebrate UFOs, lake monsters and Bigfoots, bottomless lakes, mystery lights, mythical creatures, phantoms and ghosts contains many interviews with witnesses and therefore makes a useful addition to geographical collections.

FORTEAN FICTION

The Islanders

Christopher Priest

Gollancz, 2011
Hb, pp339, £12.99
ISBN 9780575070042



Christopher Priest is probably best known as the author of *The Prestige*, on which the 2006 film was based. But for SF readers he has been one of the most consistently reliable, thoughtful and thought-provoking British writers of the last 40 years, right from his earliest novels such as *Indoctrinaire* and *A Dream of Wessex*. He specialises in uncertainty, both in what actually happens (or not) in his stories and in the unreliability of his narrators. His latest, *The Islanders*, is a return to a world he first created in the late 70s in a series of short stories collected as *The Dream Archipelago* and in his 1981 novel *The Affirmation*.

The Islanders is not a conventional work; reminiscent of Milorad Pavic's *Dictionary of the Khazars*, it's a gazetteer of a fictional world, a series of entries on the geography, history and significant events and people of around 50 of its islands. Because of "distortion caused by the temporal gradients" the islands in the archipelago can never be reliably mapped, even from the air – which makes the production of a gazetteer problematic. Not only is their geography uncertain, but so is their history, even of recent events; stories told about an artist, a poet or a philosopher are markedly different depending on where and when and why they are told. The 'Introductory' is by a novelist, Chaster Kammeston, who crops up in several contradictory passages within the book, including his own funeral; his contribution is as factually unreliable as the rest of the book. One entry is a series of fan letters to Kammeston by someone who eventually writes a novel called *The Affirmation*; she is a character in Priest's 1978 short story "The Negation".

The whole book is a study of the uncertainty and mutability of narrative – a fortean theme if ever there was one! It takes some getting into, but once you start building up a picture of the interleaving, overlaying strands running through it, it's a thoroughly rewarding read.

David V Barrett

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Midnight in Paris

Dir Woody Allen, US 2011
Warner Home Video, £9.99

Now Oscar-nominated, Woody Allen's latest outing in his yearly production line of films is being hailed as a "return to form" (again! *Vicky Cristina Barcelona* was already that for me). Commercially and critically successful, *Midnight in Paris* manages to be funny while flattering anyone with even a smattering of knowledge of early 20th-century literature and art. Today we have *The Big Bang Theory* to flatter ourselves that we are part of the inner circle, with its references to the subtleties of MMORPGs and superhero attributes. Unless you are 'in' on such matters, much of the humour is rendered meaningless. Allen, from *Love and Death* onwards, has never apologised for being well-read, and *Midnight in Paris* is chock-full of walk-on parts by the towering literary figures of the last century. Screenwriter Gil Pender (Owen Wilson, in whom Woody Allen has perhaps found the perfect surrogate for his bumbling on-screen persona, minus the humorous baggage of a Jewish upbringing) is a Hollywood screenwriter on vacation in Paris with his fiancée and her indecently rich and disapproving Republican parents. Gil dreams of writing a novel, and in Paris finds the perfect environment to realise his dream. His fiancée Inez (Rachel Adams), though, wonders why he would want to risk penury as a novelist when he's made it as a screenwriter in Hollywood? Bored of consorting with Inez's friend Paul (Michael Sheen) – whose pseudo-intellectualising about French art is exposed by none other than tour guide Carla Bruni – Gil wanders off in the heady Paris night only to be magically transported back to the 1920s. Here, he meets Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, TS Eliot and a host of painters, among them Picasso, Modigliani and Dalí (Adrian Brody's riffing on the single word 'rhinoceros' is a brilliant cameo) and faces up to the disparity between what you have and what you want. Meeting Adriana, Picasso's fictional mistress (Marion Cotillard), Gil falls in love with a world elsewhere. The trouble is, so does Adriana, whose idea of a Golden Age is not 1920s Paris but the *Belle Époque*.

Midnight in Paris is to *The Purple Rose of Cairo* what *Manhattan Murder Mystery* is to *Crimes and Misdemeanors*; the darker, crueller observations on human longing and delusions are sidestepped for essentially warm-hearted entertainment. Gil lives life as a fairy tale and the film ends with one. While the humour might not be laugh-out-loud (like the "early funny ones"), or as moving as his classic period with Diane Keaton, it reminds us that cinema can still be a place of magic and that a romantic comedy can be something more than the sexual bad manners it has descended into in recent decades.

Nick Čirkovič

Fortean Times Verdict
TIME TRAVEL COMEDY IS DEFINITELY A FUNNY ONE **8**

Punishment Park

Dir Peter Watkins, US 1970
Eureka Films, £19.99

Shot in a matter of days in sweltering heat of the California desert, *Punishment Park* was British director Peter Watkins's response to the social and political turmoil of the US in the late Sixties and early Seventies, the era of Vietnam protests, the Chicago Democratic National Convention and the Kent State shootings. First shown at festivals in 1970 (to a chorus of critical disapproval), the film was given an almost laughably truncated release and then pretty much buried for the next 40 years.

Like most of Watkins's work, *Punishment Park* could be described as docu-drama, mockumentary, or what you will, and uses both the tools and tropes of the 'real' documentary to tell its story while reflecting on the very process of 'storytelling' by the modern media as it does so. A British television crew (never seen, but headed by Watkins himself, who provides at first a 'neutral' voiceover and later some impassioned interventions) follows two groups of young political prisoners – draft-dodgers, protest singers, activists and pacifists, hippies and Yippies – in the near-future US as they undergo trial and punishment in a desert facility called Punishment Park. The first group is set loose and given the task of evading capture while crossing 50 miles of scorching rock to reach an American flag; the second attends a secret kangaroo court in an army tent, where they argue with a prosecuting board made up of members of the 'straight' society they have rejected. Instead of actors, we are faced with non-professionals encouraged by Watkins to express their genuine beliefs; the results are a fascinating and fraught experience a million miles from Hollywood's contemporary harnessing of contemporary 'protest culture' in films like *Easy Rider*. And while it's tempting to write off Watkins's experiment as an exercise in paranoia – as many did at the time – it's actually harder to do so with the benefit of hindsight; not after Guantanamo Bay, the Patriot Act and extraordinary rendition.

For Watkins (whose previous provocations had included the groundbreaking *Culloden*, in which historical events were presented as if by a contemporary documentary crew and the 'banned by the BBC' nuclear nightmare *The War Game*) the critical reception of the film was evidence of a deliberate policy of repression and marginalisation of his work, as the 30-minute interview appended to this release testifies. Confronted with Watkins's palpable anger, your average *Empire* reader might conclude it's a case of sour grapes and that the film's 'suppression' was most likely due to the fact that people didn't then, and don't now, go to the cinema to sit through a 90-minute lecture by a left-wing radical who thinks he's the British Jean-Luc Godard when they could be enjoying a decent film with a proper story and proper actors in which people fall in love and shit gets blown up. Bah, Watkins would respond, that's because you are in thrall to the MAVM (mass audiovisual media) and its most potent weapon, the monoform, "a formatted and repetitive TV languageform of rapidly edited and fragmented images accompanied by a dense bombardment of sound, all held together by the classical narrative structure", responsible not just for reams of crap TV and vapid Hollywood movies but complicit in "the nightmare of mass consumerism and resulting environmental crises facing the planet… the many debilitating psychological and social problems involved in the centralised mass distribution of repetitive and closed audiovisual languageforms (including increased privatisation, resistance to collective behaviour, acceptance of authority structures, fear of 'the other', aggression, etc.)".

At this point in the discussion, our *Empire* reader will probably roll up his glossy apologia for the MAVM and biff Watkins sharply over the head with it. So much for the kind of dialectical, debate-driven community cinema the director had always hoped to create.

There is an unavoidable sense, watching *Punishment Park*, that Watkins is a relic of a bygone age who appears literally to have swallowed the textbooks of Marxist media theory long-since abandoned in the name of 'audience studies', 'reception theory' and other such decadent models, and that his film is a time capsule of political and critical attitudes equally foreign to us now. Nevertheless, it's a more complex and far better film than either its origins or its subsequent treatment would suggest, and a brave one to boot in its determination to avoid the clutches of the monoform that Watkins hadn't, in fact, yet theorised. And while I find myself more and more in agreement with his analysis, I think he now has slightly less of a chance than a snowball in the California desert of ever reaching his imagined audience.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict

THOUGHT-PROVOKING AGIT-PROP RESCUED FOR BLU-RAY 8

Legend

Dir Ridley Scott, US 1985

20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, £15.99

Legend is a very curious film. Directed by Ridley Scott after *Blade Runner*, although apparently based on an idea he'd had in mind before making *Alien*, it's an unashamedly Disney-esque fantasy romp full of cute dwarves, ghastly goblins and slow-motion unicorns. Oddly, I find the early part of the film the most interesting; here, we have a naïvely romantic woodland idyll for Jack (a young Tom Cruise) and Princes Lily (Mia Sara) in which the visuals attain levels of kitschy gorgeousness rarely dreamed of: a profusion of fake flowers and impossible vegetation, an edenic scene in which everything is coated in blowing thistledown, blossom, glitter and even bubbles. I've never seen anything quite like it, although I suspect its lasting influence was confined to air freshener and soap powder ads.

OK, there's a dark side; in fact, the baddie is the Lord of Darkness, no less – played by Tim Curry, barely recognisable under a ton of suitably Satanic prosthetics – who is so nasty he wants to kill off the last two unicorns and thus ensure that another dawn will never break. Don't ask me how these things work – something to do with the eternal balance of darkness and light – but after Darkness's goblins de-horn one of these lovely mythical beasts, a Narnian winter descends over the realm, Princess Lily goes missing and Jack, along with a motley crew of elves, dwarves and fairies, sets off to save the world and rescue his love.

As fantasy narratives go, this is probably too generic even for Joseph Campbell to swallow, and William Hjortsberg (who also wrote *Fallen Angel*, the basis for Alan Parker's *Angel Heart*) could surely have racked his brains for something more. But, Scott's visuals win the day with their determinedly naïve, fairy-tale stylings, and somehow the whole thing remains surprisingly watchable, charming even, despite the undeniable daftness of it all.

The disc includes both the European theatrical release (no Tangerine Dream and Jon Anderson for us, then, just Jerry Goldsmith's rather lovely score) and Scott's 20-minute longer Director's Cut, which doesn't deliver any extra scenes as such, but does change the emphasis, particularly at the film's end.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict

SPRINKLED WITH FAIRY DUST, THIS LEGEND STILL BEGUILES 7

Frankenhooker

Dir Frank Henenlotter, US 1990

Arrow Video, £24.99

Some gross-out B-movies are so bad they're perversely enjoyable. This isn't one of them. Frank Henenlotter's *Frankenhooker* is a calculated attempt to make a movie with cult appeal. The idea is good – medical student Jeffrey Franken (James Lorinz) rebuilds his dead girlfriend (she got on the wrong end of a lawnmower) using parts harvested from murdered New York hookers. Done with the right irreverent approach, this *Frankenstein* knock-off could have been decent enough, but Henenlotter takes far too long to get things going and very poor special effects result in an almost unwatchable mish-mash. Defenders will claim it is so over-the-top that you're not supposed to take it seriously, but *Frankenhooker* leaves something of a bad taste in the mouth, and the Blu-ray delivers a host of extras that the movie doesn't justify. As a riff on *Frankenstein*, try the late Ken Russell's *Gothic* instead.

Brian J Robb

Fortean Times Verdict

BAD-TASTE HORROR SPOOF IS OVERLONG EVEN AT 80 MINS 3

SHORTS

MEDEA

(BFI Video, £19.99)

Made in 1969 and forming a companion piece to the director's earlier *Oedipus Rex*, Pasolini's next dip into classical myth yielded another masterpiece of great visual beauty, emotional clout and not infrequent bafflement. The lack of dialogue, the dislocations of time and place (ancient-looking Cappadocia, Renaissance Pisa), the roaring 'primitive' music, can make *Medea* a disorienting experience at times – appropriate, given Pasolini's theme of mythic man's own dislocation in modernity – but stick with it and this tale told by a centaur (an unreliable narrator, if ever there was one) offers many rewards. Of course, the big draw for non-Pasolini fans is the chance to see the great Maria Callas in her only film role – and she is quite remarkable. It's a non-singing part (though she'd performed the title character many times in Cherubini's opera *Medeé*), but *La Divina* is an electrifying screen presence nonetheless, and seeing her captured in Ennio Gauarneieri's glorious colour photography fills in some of the gaps left by the poor black and white footage and still photographs that constitute the only visual record of her career on the operatic stage. A wonderful work, from a great director, and this Blu-ray/DVD dual release is highly recommended despite a woeful lack of extras. **DS 9/10**

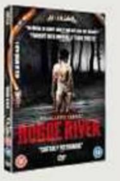
CLEOPATRA

(20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, £15.99)

A rather different take on the classics from Hollywood at its most outrageously grandiose, Joseph L Mankiewicz's *Cleopatra* – the most expensive film ever made – quickly became a byword for empty, lavish spectacle and the excesses of a Hollywood studio system which, by 1963, was an unwieldy empire experiencing its own decline and fall in a rapidly changing media landscape. Many of the harsh criticisms over the years have been more than a little unfair; yes, it's a bit of a lumbering monster, over-stuffed with big sets and bigger stars and lacking dramatic focus, but it's hard to resist the lure of Taylor's Cleo, with her iconic costumes (and lots of 'em), Burton's glowering Mark Anthony and Rex Harrison's wonderfully unlikely Cæsar. To be fair, Mankiewicz – who was one of the most literate figures ever to survive and thrive in the dream factory – deserves every credit for bringing this OTT epic to its eventual completion. The Blu-ray release looks as handsome as you could wish for, and the generous helping of excellent special features makes the whole thing an irrestistable package; perfect for a long, rainy Sunday afternoon. **DS 8/10**

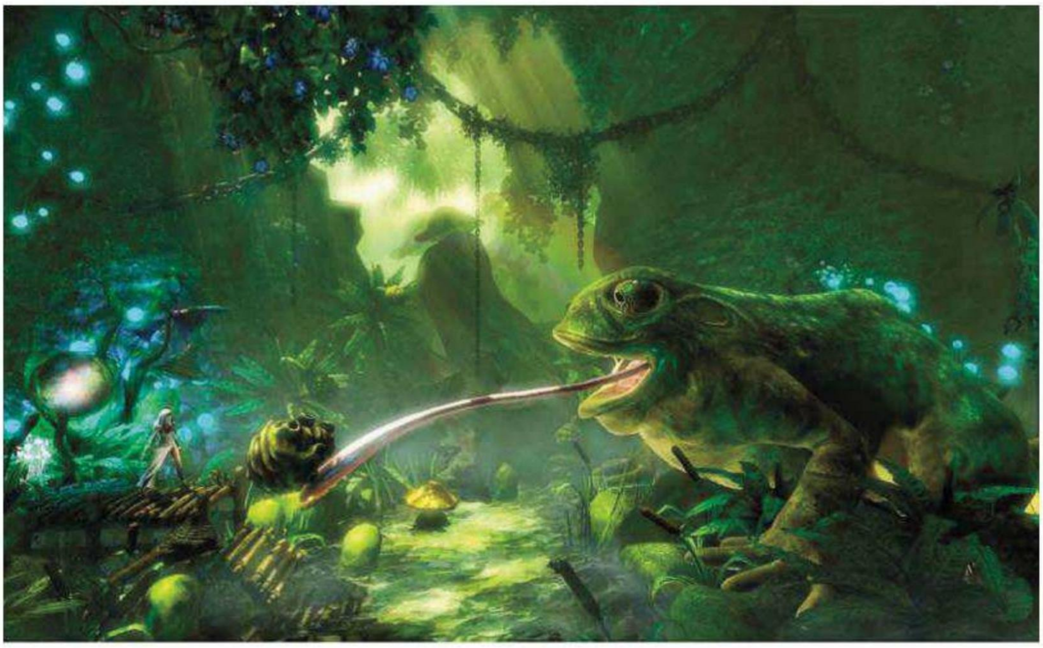
ROGUE RIVER

(G2 Pictures, £19.99/£15.99)



"Agony, incest and out-and-out insanity," screams the press release. Add a huge debt to *Misery* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and you're pretty much there. Attractive girl breaks down in the middle of nowhere, is picked-up by kindly passer-by who takes her to the home he shares with his sister. Much vileness ensues. It's obvious that originality wasn't on the agenda at this grubby monster's conception, but *Rogue River* adds enough horror and some real moments of disgust to make it my favourite necro-incest-horror movie of the month.

Tim Weinberg 6/10



Trine 2

PC £19.99, Lace Mamba Global/Frozenbyte

One of the most enjoyable games I've played in a good while, a couple of years back now, was a side-scrolling puzzle platformer with a cursory fantasy storyline that made Christopher Paolini look like a genius of originality. But in Frozenbyte's *Trine* it became clear very quickly that the storyline was an affectionate send-up of some stock fantasy fiction and D&D tropes, featuring as it did a batty wizard, a nimble female archer thief and a portly knight, whose girth was only outstripped by his bravery.

Add to that some of the most gorgeous fairytale scrolling backdrops to be rendered anywhere, a series of puzzles that had you strolling along amiably through gradually increasing levels of difficulty, the whole outing bathed in an almost dreamlike retro air, and *Trine* turned out to be a cracking little game. It also possessed, though hidden away, a local co-op multiplayer feature.

Playing one character at a time in the single campaign (instantly switchable between characters depending on the particular conundrum or foes you faced), the multiplayer promised lots of fun for collaborative puzzling and battling on your shared quest. All in all, great stuff.

Too often with a sequel to a successful game, expectations are cruelly dashed. Thankfully, that's not the case with *Trine 2*. Frozenbyte have adhered to that old adage: if it ain't broke, don't fix it. *Trine* worked. It was easy, on the face of it, to dismiss the game's simplicity, writing it off as nothing more than another aspiring indie title embarrassing itself among the big gun developers.

But what *Trine* managed to do was embarrass most of *them* by not highlighting its shortcomings with elongated cutaways and bloated set-pieces that only ended up exposing much of the tedium in between. Instead, it focused on a couple of core gaming fundamentals: Be fun. Be compulsive. *Trine* was indeed repetitive, but *Super Mario*- and *Sonic the Hedgehog*-repetitive – and we all know how easy it was to spend hour upon hour playing those games. Yes, if it ain't broke, don't fix it. *Trine 2* doesn't so much fix anything from the original game as hone and enhance what was already good about it.

The first thing you notice is the more up-close perspective of the characters, surrounded by those endlessly lovely rainbow-coloured backdrops, be they forests, caves, chocolate box villages, icescapes, or vine-decked ruins and imposing castles. The lighting is simply gorgeous, with rays of sunlight shooting through shadowy interiors or the depths of a pool and bright flame licking at dark corners. The AI of the foes and of the level bosses is now of a busier kind. No longer will it be enough for Zoya the thief to rain arrows down upon an enemy to dispatch it. Some falling masonry might provide a little help in finishing off a foe, and it never ceases to be fun braining a lumbering goblin with the hammer of Pontius the knight.

Another enhancement is the greater use of the surrounding environment to provide solutions to the innumerable obstacles you will face as you progress. The use of water as a magical element of transformation is a wonderful touch, as are the elevating columns of air. *Trine 2* contains the same open-ended dimension to puzzle-solving as before, but because the means of doing so, with the array of objects and elements on hand, has been broadened, it makes for even more fun.

There are many moments in *Trine 2* when the game seems almost to come to a standstill, but there are always enough options through juggling the skills of the three protagonists to find a way through. The death of one or more characters, as before, means waiting until the next waypoint to regenerate, which can make things tricky if Zoya is done for, no longer able to use her nifty grappling hook to swing from one dangly thing to the next while there are nasty spike-filled pits below. The original physics engine has been properly tweaked, though. It's true that the platforms and boxes that Amadeus can conjure have something of a *Deus ex machina* element to them, but mostly the compelling forward momentum of the game can make you forget they are an option.

An addition is a levelling-up, RPG dimension containing bolt-on core skill improvements such as customised arrows for Zoya, bashing refinements for Pontius's Thor-like returning hammer and greater object conjuration powers for Amadeus. Here, the RPG element has a sense of natural progression within the core elements of the game, rather than that of an afterthought. It is neither too little to make it a pointless addition, nor too much to get bogged down in.

Ditto the multiplayer. Playing online as well, as on a local network or single PC, is now a fully-fledged option, a co-operative enterprise for up to three players, in which the puzzle-solving and foe-bashing allows even more variations upon solutions to be spun (with the ability for two or more players to use multiple controllers on a single PC) providing genuine added value and extended gameplay. And for a game that retails at only 20 quid on PC/Mac as a collector's edition (artwork booklet, original soundtrack and code for a free download of the original game) and can be picked up for around half that by shopping around, it's a steal.

Trine 2, like its predecessor, is by no means perfect – but it is the perfect antidote to one too many overblown sound-and-fury releases costing twice the price and signifying nothing much but a trail of bugged and botched release dates. Frozenbyte save the day once more, serving up another fantasy banquet of enchanting, amusing, beautiful, addictive, damn fine gaming fun.

Nick Čirkovič

Fortean Times Verdict

YE OLDE WORLDE GAMING GLORY PLUS UP-TO-DATE PHYSICS **9**

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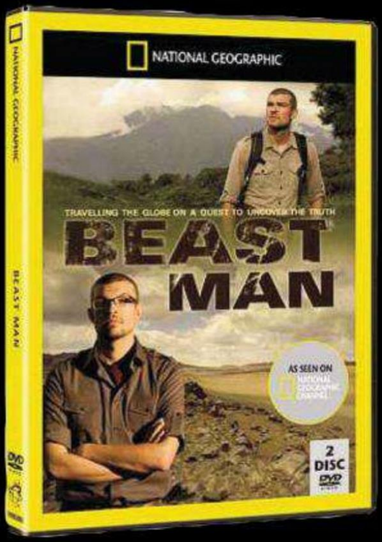
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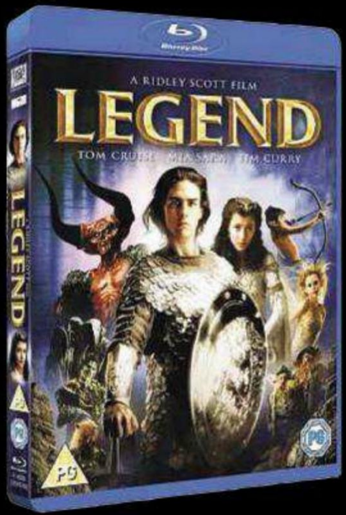

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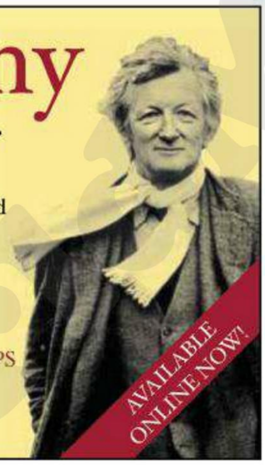
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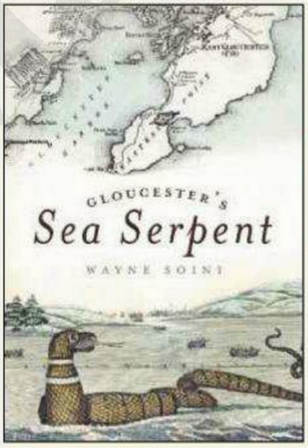

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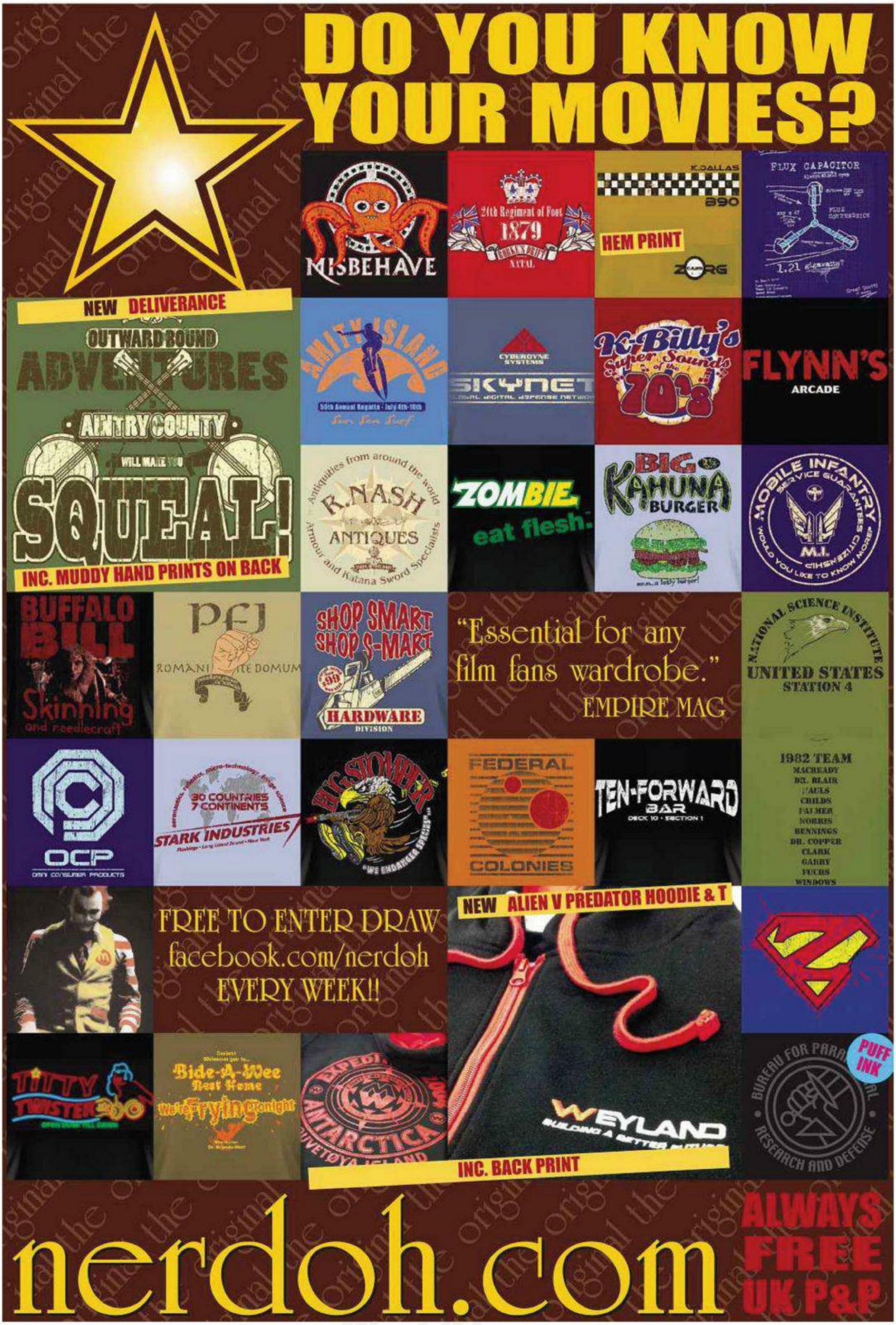

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Dear FT...

letters

That old razor

Martin Jenkins [**FT285:67**] misunderstands the application of Occam's Razor. To hold that "supernatural" phenomena are in fact due to some combination of illusion, delusion, deception and misperception requires no assumptions: we know that the human brain is susceptible to such errors. In investigating supposedly supernatural events, this needs to be borne constantly in mind. To assume that the "supernatural" actually exists outside human brains, on the other hand, requires that we assume the existence of forces and entities for which the evidence is dubious at the very best. The Razor, correctly applied, favours the "natural" explanation. This doesn't, of course, mean that that explanation is always correct.

Dr PG Swindells
Wolverhampton, West Midlands

Released panthers

A family called the Palmers ran a nightclub called the Hacienda in Hatfield near Doncaster (not the famous one in Manchester). They made some serious money at one stage and, always seeking another thrill, somehow procured two panthers that they kept in a cage behind the club. I'm not sure if they were there to enhance the club's atmosphere or whether they were 'pets'. There was a fad in the 1980s and 90s for villains to keep exotic pets as a mark of wealth. Anyway, things eventually went wrong for the Palmers and in the end they had to give it all up. They went back to their gypsy roots, and apparently Anton Palmer, after trying desperately to give the panthers away, ended up just letting them loose. I heard this tale from Anton Palmer's mechanic who used to go round there and attend to the family's collection of classic American cars. He remembers Mrs Palmer senior screaming at him to "stay back" as she lobbed hunks of beef into the enclosure armed only with a besom... Now, when I hear of big cats in the area, I believe it.

Jack Romano
By email

Airport coincidence

The following coincidence happened to my parents while they were waiting for a flight to Sydney with my sister's family at Heathrow airport in October 2011. Before the flight, my father was wandering around the duty-free shops when my youngest niece remarked that he had dropped his luggage tag and she returned it to him. He hadn't actually lost it, so the tag obviously belonged to someone else. The name on the tag was Tom Lannon and my father's name is Tim Lannon. It's not a common surname, so to find that in itself would have been quite rare but the similar first name just added to the bizarreness of the find! Was the tag just waiting to be found by my niece?

Nathalie Watkins
Wordsley, West Midlands

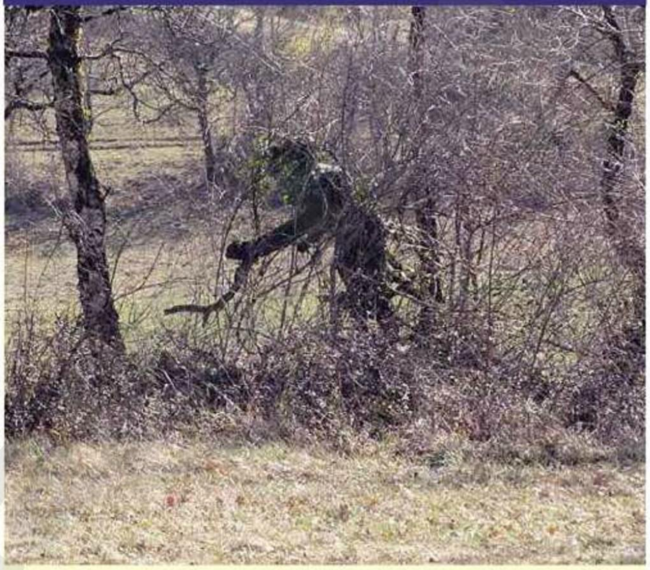
Not so spooky

John Blackburn asks if anyone has shared his experience of having the mobile phone in his or her pocket accidentally dial an appropriate somebody [**FT283:75**]. I have had this experience and, like him, was convinced that it would have required an implausibly long series of accidental button-pushing to get to just that right person... and that it must represent some great undiscovered psychic principle at work.

Sadly, an exploration of my phone found that making such a call to the closest person to you is not only a lot simpler than it seems, but if the phone is on and unlocked, quite likely. Pretty much all mobiles have two main buttons on their outside or face. A left/green one for making or answering calls and right/red one for switching off or hanging up. If – as most of us never have any reason to do – you simply press the green pickup button when the phone is switched on but otherwise inactive, it shortcuts to your recent call history, with the most recent call you made or received highlighted. Press the green button a second time and it will phone that person. So all that was required for Mr Blackburn to unwittingly phone his wife is for her to be the last person he spoke to on the phone and for the green button to have been accidentally pressed twice in his pocket.

Lawrence Brennan
Liverpool

Simulacra Corner



Kate Haines found a dead branch covered in moss and brambles at the bottom of a field near where she lives in southwest France, and thought it looked like "an old fella working in the field".

*We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to sieveking@forteantimes.com – please tell us your postal address and we'll send you an exclusive **Fortean Times** gift.*

Gill-Man

I was delighted to read Alistair Moffat's response [**FT285:68**] to my Forum piece [**FT283:54–55**]. The image from the cover of the March 1952 issue of *Baffling Mysteries* comic, of which I was previously unaware, does indeed bear a striking similarity to the main image from one of the film posters created by the artist Reynold Brown for *Creature From The Black Lagoon* (1954). See http://bit.ly/x55ZKJ (posterwire.com).

Indeed it seems more than possible that the aquatic humanoid depicted in *Baffling Mysteries* was an influence on the creation of Universal's Gill-Man.

Incidentally, the artist Reynold Brown did begin his career as a newspaper comic-strip illustrator before being employed by film studios as a poster artist. He probably remains best known for the posters he painted to promote numerous science fiction films of the 1950s. The posters Brown produced for all three Creature films and other genre fare like *Attack Of The 50ft Woman*, *The Incredible Shrinking Man* and *Tarantula!* – the latter two films directed by Creature director Jack Arnold for Universal – are amongst the more memorable movie posters of that era.

Martyn P Jackson
Cramlington, Northumberland

letters

The dog ate my *Fortean Times*!

I just wanted to ask if this month's *FT* had any ABCs on the cover as, despite my being a long-time subscriber, this is the first time my dog Sheba has ever torn the post to shreds! And if there's any chance of a replacement ,it would really be appreciated...
Mark Wylie, *By email*

Kind words

Regarding the wasp that resisted poison [**FT278:76**], the best policy for getting rid of wasps is to turn the light off, open a window, and ask it to leave. That works four times out of five. To torture the poor thing and then squish it seems harsh. As wasps are useful members of our ecological community, perhaps a little compassion might be good for your karma. I tell you it works. If you don't believe me, try talking ants out of your house or building. They are very responsive to a kind word. If you are not compassionate towards our tiny fellow creatures how can you experience the weirder side of life? Would you notice?

For instance, I'm a tree surgeon and almost every time we climb a fresh tree to work on it, and especially when we are about to fell it, a sharp wind will get up for a few minutes (on a calm day) before dying away – nearly every time mind. It does it with my other half and often with my son. Sometimes while we are working trees, our climbing and pulling ropes tangle up something chronic, but if you tell the tree that what you are doing is necessary then the ropes for the most part stop tangling.

John Rhodes
By email

Chilling thought

Reading the review of Uncon 2011 [**FT284:26–29**], I was reminded of Jon Ronson's talk and had a distinctly fortean thought. According to Ronson, psychopaths are determined, can rise to high levels in society on their intelligence and charm, and talk up their own importance. They are not necessarily physically dangerous, but nonetheless can dispassionately take decisions that can have a dire lasting impact. Well, the psychiatrists themselves spring to mind! Some of them, at any rate. Where better to deviously hide out, careerwise? Chilling.

James Wright
By email

The Childe of Hale

The tree carving of the Childe of Hale [a celebrated giant – see **FT187:50–53**], in the village of Hale near Liverpool, was felled this summer [2011] for safety reasons; and the Childe of Hale pub no longer has the mosaic of the Childe after it was refurbished.

Heather Charles
By email

Mars missions

The front page of *Fortean Times* #284 asks: "Are all missions to the Red Planet doomed to disaster?" The answer is a resounding No.

There have been some brilliantly successful Mars missions, including the Mars Global Surveyor, which reached the planet in September 1997, and the plucky Mars rovers, Spirit and Opportunity, which lasted far longer than their expected lifetime. In fact, Opportunity is still operational today.

The first successful mission was back in July 1965, when the US probe Mariner 4 reached Mars and returned 21 images. (This doesn't sound impressive, but computer technology was very basic at that time.) Other successful US Mars probes include Mariners 6, 7, and 9, Vikings 1 and 2, Mars Pathfinder, Mars Odyssey 2001, Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, and Phoenix – with Curiosity having launched successfully and being currently *en route*. You state that the Viking soil chemistry experiments were ambiguous about whether life was present; this is true, but the Viking probes were highly successful, sending back stunning images of the planet's surface.

The Soviet Mars exploration programme has been less fortunate, but the Russians were the first to soft-land a probe as long ago as December 1971 (Mars 3). Mars 5, Mars 6 and Phobos 2 have also been partially successful.

I guess it just shows the difficulty of hitting a moving target only about 4,200 miles (6,760km) across, which is never less than 48 million miles (77 million km) away, and careers through space at over 15 miles (24km) per second.

Bill Robinson
Slough, Berkshire

The Tooting lemur

The lemur discovered on Tooting Common in south-west London [**FT285:10**] was originally from Tropiquaria Zoo in Watchet, Somerset, of which I am the zoological director. A few years ago when our lemur group became too large, we passed it with several relatives to another zoo called Beaver Water World, on the Surrey/Kent border. This was normal zoo practice, with no money changing hands, because these are endangered animals, and we do not trade in them. The animals were marked with microchips and registered with Defra. Sometime later, Bif (as the lemur was called) was stolen from Beaver World and the theft reported to Surrey Police.

Shortly after that, the owner of Beaver Water World became aware that Bif was being kept in a travellers' camp and informed the police. For various reasons, there was no police raid on this establishment. Several months later when the travellers were allegedly in Streatham, Bif was found in poor health, loose in Tooting and given by the Metropolitan Police to the Blue Cross, who initially treated it. When it had sufficiently recovered, it was handed to the Heathrow animal reception centre, where it made a gradual recovery but somehow injured its tail; the vet in charge euthanised it on 12 January. The authorities involved had refused to hand it back to Beaver Water World because they couldn't prove that it was theirs. Allegedly, it didn't have its unique identifiable microchip, but Beaver Water World were not given any chance to confirm this. It is known that there is a vet in this area who has removed microchips.

A keeper from Tropiquaria, who had worked with Bif for several years, offered to try to identify it in an identification parade – but our email was not even acknowledged.

Chris Moiser
Tropiquaria Zoo, Watchet, Somerset

White wonder

This albino deer was photographed in Groveland, California, in early 2009.

Linda Martin
By email

Black deer seen

Further to Karl Shuker's report on "Holy Mystery Deer" [**FT283:21**], I wish to report a recent sighting of a "black roe deer". To the best of my recall, this occurred around 24 November 2011, at about 3.00pm. I live in Bridlington, East Riding of Yorkshire, and I was on my way home from a hospital appointment. Rather than take the direct route, I turned off the main York Road into a country lane known as Woldgate. It was just a whim to take this route, as I find it a rather attractive area. About two miles (3.2km) down this lane where the Woldgate starts to become a forest, I made a right turn into another country lane which joins the Woldgate to the B1253 close to Boynton. It was on this unnamed lane (about a mile / 800m long) that I encountered this "black deer" around 500–600 yards into the forest.

It was still daylight, and the animal emerged from the left side of the forest onto the lane about 50 yards in front of me, and trotted ahead of me. I could see that that it was very dark in colour with a lighter (off-white or cream coloured) rear end. Initially I thought that it might be a goat, but as I caught up with it in the car it saw me and bolted off into the woodland on the right side. For two or three seconds I caught sight of the profile of its head, and it certainly wasn't a goat – it was a deer, a young doe, and its colour was most certainly black or as near as black as could be – definitely not brown, dark brown or russet.

I thought no more about this encounter, other than the novelty of seeing a wild animal close-up – I was within 12 to 15ft (3.6–4.6m) of it. It wasn't until I read Dr Shuker's report that I thought to look up "black deer" on Wikipedia, and then discovered that they are not indigenous to the UK mainland. So what did I see? Was it some imported animal that had escaped from a private collection? Some unexpected mutation that is apparently rarer than an albino deer? Or was it something else – and more importantly, has anyone else seen the same (or similar) animal in this area?

Frederick J Stephens
By email

Escaped deer

One of the Holy Mystery Deer from Karl Shuker's 'Alien Zoo' [**FT283:21**] has escaped and got in to the penultimate paragraph of Barry Baldwin's 'Classical Corner' [**FT283:19**]. I am worried it may eat some of Barry's ancient literary references. Could you send a sub-editor to round it up?

Martin Stubbs
London

Editor's note: This is in the running for the oddest mistake ever to occur in *Fortean Times*.

Fooling Andy Kaufman

In 1981, while managing a community access studio here in New York City, I had an unexpected evening of Andy Kaufman [see **FT275:32–35**]. John Burke, a friend of mine who was a producer at the studio, had become good friends with Kaufman and had asked him to come down and appear on his show, *What NY Needs*, a sort of omnibus entertainment show with live phone call-ins from the home-viewing audience. Unfortunately, John also produced another show called *Martial Art Forms*, which interested Andy more. So one night, Andy showed up unexpectedly with his parents and demanded to be on the live, on the air, martial art show. John let him on and Andy immediately became his Intergender Wrestling Champion character in front a number of humourless black belts. After about three minutes of his act, it became clear that Andy was going to be in physical danger, not only from the male black belts but from a women's heavyweight boxing champion who happened to be in the studio that night.

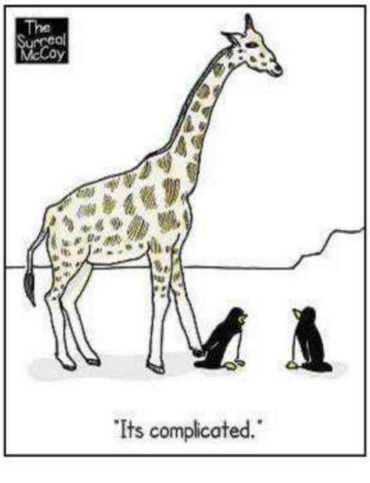
Enlisting the help of two other programme producers whose show was going on live in half an hour, John escorted Andy screaming from the studio. These two producers had a comedy programme called *The Slycraft Show* and they played salesman from the fictitious Slycraft Corporation selling the audience absurd products. They convinced Andy to appear on their show (clips can be found on the web). At some point one of the performers, Bob Pagani, got into a heated argument with Andy on air and they stayed arguing for the rest of the programme. The show was over but the two continued screaming at each other. The studio was due to begin another programme, so I threw them out. First to the hallway and then out to the street, when their screaming was leaking into the next programme an hour later. When I closed the studio two hours later, around 2am, I was amazed to find both of them still screaming at each other in front of the building, the only audience being confused and probably frightened passers-by on 23rd Street and Park Avenue. I'm not clear if Andy knew this at the time or not, but Pagani was, and still is, a disciple of the master media trickster, Alan Able. It turned out that Andy was in awe of Alan Able, which makes a lot of sense. Later, Bob arranged for Andy to meet Alan Able. Andy and Pagani became good friends until Andy's death.

My friend was not so fortunate(?). Andy became obsessed with John's dying mother, who was permanently hospitalised and suffering from bouts of dementia. Despite John's requests, Andy insisted on visiting the woman in hospital. She had never met him but was familiar with his TV work.

The visit didn't go well, with John's mother denying that this person was Andy Kaufman, basically saying, "What sort of horrible son tries to fool a dying mother by trying to convince her this obvious phoney is Andy Kaufman from my favourite show *Taxi*?" Andy was very upset by this incident and he soon broke off the friendship with a cryptic phone call saying, "I'm a very sick man, you don't want to be friends with me."

The next day, John visited his mother and first thing she said was: "So when are you going to bring that wonderful Andy Kaufman back?" Whether it was an extremely crafty old lady fooling with Andy's head or just a cosmic joke fostered by dementia, in a way Andy Kaufman got a dose of his own medicine – and he certainly didn't like it.

William Hohauser
By email



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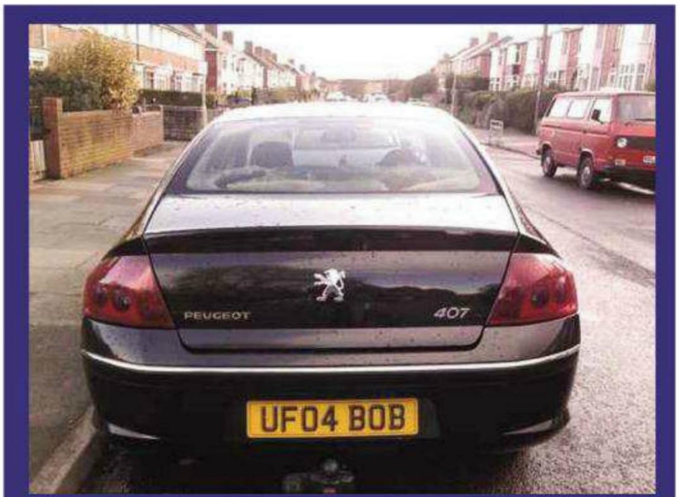

Bespoke transport

Out walking through the streets of Exeter on 28 December, we came across this intriguing number plate. Could the UFO it refers to be for Bob Rickard, *FT*'s esteemed founding co-editor? Or maybe for JR Bob Dobbs, guru of the Church of the SubGenius?
Alexis Lykiard, *Exeter, Devon*

Icy puzzle

Interesting debate on the Mpemba effect from James A Tucker and Ian Simmons [**FT281:69**]. Without even retiring to the lab or the kitchen, a little thought experiment might show that the problems here are in comparing things that are not equal.

At first the "hot water freezes before cold water" statement might evoke a reaction of "How can that possibly be?" Surely, even if the hot water cools faster, at some point it would catch up with the slower-cooling cold sample, after which time the two samples would be identical and therefore ought to cool equally and freeze at the same moment.

But the two samples are not really identical. In hot water, the molecules are more energetic, i.e. are vibrating more vigorously (this is what heat actually is, in chemical/physical terms) and therefore they take up more space. Thus, if the experimenter initially measured out identical volumes of hot and cold water, the hot sample would contain fewer molecules. Once its cooling caught up with the initially cold sample, with fewer molecules in the initially hot sample, there would be less vibrational energy to maintain a liquid form, and hence that (now smaller) sample ought to freeze first. But it's also true that hot water should cool at a faster rate than cold water, because there is a higher rate of surface evaporation, which draws energy from the fluid, thus cooling it. (This is also how a layer of sweat on the skin cools down the body, and why a rain-drenched body feels colder than a dry one – or a moistened finger reveals the wind direction.) So the initially hot sample (containing fewer molecules) would also have lost even more molecules through evaporation.

In theory, with a little calculation, one could begin with a larger hot sample such that the two start with identical numbers of molecules (difficult to achieve this level of precision in the lab or kitchen, but we could at least get closer than by beginning with equal volumes), but due to the faster surface evaporation, the hot sample would still end up with fewer molecules present when the two reached temperature equilibrium. Again, in theory, one could start with an even larger hot sample such that on reaching the same temperature as the initially cold sample the numbers of molecules would be the same (or at least as close as practical restraints allow). That would (perhaps) be a truer measure of the hot/cold/freezing measurement problem, and with a little practice and some trial-and-error it might even be repeatable to create consistent results. But it would be a contrived "fix" – and would it really demonstrate the original proposition? I don't know, because I haven't actually done the experiment. And therefore I can't be certain what the results would show. That's science for you.

There, and I managed to avoid saying "Within the bounds of experimental error." Oops. Nearly got away with it.
Thomas Greenwood
By email

Ian Simmons comments: Mr Greenwood elaborates on my point about the need to understand and control all the variables involved to truly understand what's going on. To get a completely fair comparison, you need to identify even the tiniest thing that creates a difference between the two samples – even, potentially, the number of molecules in each and the relative rates of evaporation. Identifying these and designing an experiment to account for them wouldn't be a contrived 'fix' – it would be making the comparison as exact and fair as possible. This is the reason why many experiments seem over-elaborate and detailed to outsiders and why things like the faster-than-light neutrinos generate so much debate in science. It's all about whether the variables have been controlled effectively.
By email

Bovine barometers

As in Sicily [**FT284:69**], there is a folk belief in most of Germany that when a cow lies down, rain is indeed on the way [Mythchaser, **FT282:17**].
Claudia Frewin
Herne Hill, London

Pit bulls?

I have always been fascinated by bi-pedal reptilians and the story of "The Lizardman" that terrorised Lee County, South Carolina, in 1988 [**FT51:34–37, 253:26–27**]. It seems that "The Lizardman" had returned to Lee County, according to a story broadcast by WIST-Channel 10 of South Carolina: http://bit.ly/yayVoY (wistv.com). The "creature" had attacked a woman's car. After viewing the photos, I was amazed to see that the damage to her car was identical to that done to my friend's car as she watched horrified as two pit bulls mauled the bodywork of her 2000 Buick Ultra in an attempt to get at a cat hiding in the wheel well. Could the damage to the South Carolina woman's car actually have been the work of marauding pit bulls?
Greg May
By email

Phantom amœba

In summarising fortean moments caught in the background of feature films [**FT284:46**], Peter Hassall takes me to task over my description of a huge amœba flopping over a dry stone wall in the closing scene of *The Railway Children*. Considering I was remembering this from a single viewing when the film first came out, I think I did pretty well to see it at all. Having now re-viewed it several times I agree it is a large leaf-covered branch, but I still think it is anomalous. I don't see a tree for it to fall from (and that would be extraordinary in itself), and I stand by my description of it coming over the wall horizontally.

I can only conclude that one or more locals of Oakworth, West Yorkshire, having observed the filming, decided to make their mark by hiding behind the wall in the centre of the shot and throwing the branch over. Extremely fortunate for them that that was the take used; perhaps they would like to come forward and claim their place in history?

As an addendum to Peter's list, at the very end of the credits of *Performance*, when any sensible person has left the cinema, the white Rolls Royce driving into the distance carrying Fox/Jagger to his death simply fades away like a disappearing ghost leaving an empty road – though clearly this is intended and not anomalous.
Roger J Morgan
London

it happened to me...

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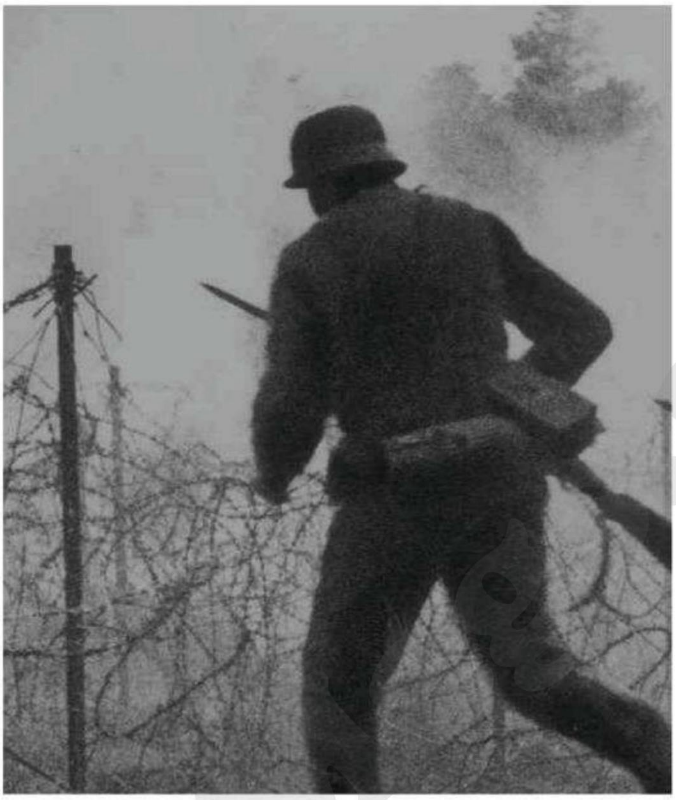
Dreaming of the Army

As a small child, I had some recurring dreams of a most peculiar and vivid nature. My mother says that I was a comfortable baby; I had an old and disciplined personality, unlike my family or peers. She says I always had a military presence/feel about me. My first dream used to haunt my nights many a time from when I was small till I was about eight. The most peculiar thing is that I had a full sense of emotion and feeling. I dreamed I was sitting in the back of a flatbed truck on the right hand side. The truck was full and I was the last man on. The truck was a military green with the canvas roof shading us from the winter sun. The air was moist, with a slight frost on the ground, and I could see my breath. I looked down at a couple standing at a house gate, the wall made of flints and brick. I was overwhelmed with emotion – extremely sad, but also proud, anxious and adrenalin-fuelled. I was waving as if waving goodbye to the couple at the gate.

My second dream was similar. The setting was a bunker in some remote African desert. The bunker was open on the right hand side, with sand creeping its way over the top, creating little piles on the floor. Up ahead, the bunker linked to another, as if meeting it at a 30-degree angle. The bunker stretched for quite some way, out of my line of vision. A man stood in front of me, shouting at me to “hurry up” and kept telling me to “come on”. I was terrified; I felt that we were being hunted by something. I was fuelled with adrenaline again, and then I ran up to the man... My dream for all I know ended there.

Soon after, like most children, I forgot the dreams, relegated them to the back of my mind and locked them in a box. About three years ago, I was at my father’s house having a chat and making coffee. I walked through to the sitting room where I turned on the TV and changed the channel to a documentary about the SAS. The founder of the SAS, David Stirling, was being discussed, and his picture came up (above). Suddenly my dreams came flooding back, more vivid and real than ever. My dad said I went pale and was non-responsive; apparently I looked shocked, clutching the coffee table that I was sitting on. What I was seeing was David Stirling standing in front of me in the bunker in Africa shouting at me to get a move on.



GETTY IMAGES/HULTON ARCHIVE

Could this be the reason why I am obsessed with the military?

Since then I have had similar dreams and hallucinations linking back to my childhood ones. For example, when clay pigeon shooting, I had a flashback/hallucination of a German soldier running away from me, and I popped on target and blew his head off, in reality nailing the clay pigeon. Some are not pleasant, as you can well imagine. My last flashback was only two weeks ago [in May 2011]. I was standing outside, attempting to light a cigarette. Suddenly, I was shirtless, only wearing military green trousers and rotting leather boots – lighting my cigarette, looking over a battle scene, feeling full of relief and extremely tired with the sun beating down on me. Then in reality I was in my front garden in cloudy-looking cold weather, my brother staring at me, saying I had gone rigid and pale.

Is this something from a past life?

Alex Sims
By email

Perfect goal

I recently played in a veterans’ football tournament in Bangkok, Thailand, and (very unusually) managed to score a spectacular picture-book goal. This was unusual, not only because I am usually utterly inept given a scoring opportunity, but also because I had visualised the goal some half an hour before the start of the game.

This wishful thinking (for that is what I took it for) had me executing a perfect scissor-kick in mid-air past a flailing goalkeeper as the ball dropped from a clear blue sky. Therefore, when this scenario actually occurred, and the ball kicked up off their keeper and was indeed dropping out of a clear blue sky, I simply clicked into autopilot, launched myself into the air and crashed the ball home on the volley, just as I had rehearsed mentally prior to the game.

It is important to note how out of character this is for me as a player. I just don’t do that kind of thing and the level of assuredness and lack of panic almost seemed to come from an external source. This is what has got me wondering about the origin of the moment. I knew exactly what to do; there was no question in my mind, no hesitation.

Could this be an example of precognition or simply the power of positive thought, making my wishes and reality converge? Before it happened, I had been pondering the veracity of such events after reading about them in recent editions of *FT*, for example the dream experiments at Maimonides Medical Centre, New York [**FT275:52**]. Was the Universe answering my questions and showing me that in fact these things are real?

Duncan Kaiser
By email

Precognitive trivia

Like Doug Hall, I have precognitive dreams [**FT271:76**] but mostly concerning extremely mundane things. For instance, I woke one morning bemoaning the fact I had dreamt about work most of the night. About two months later, I went into a meeting and when a colleague I didn’t know came in, I got a feeling of *déjà vu*. I found I knew what was going to happen and be said for large portions of the meeting. I unnerved one of the speakers when I mimed quite a few of their sentences as they spoke.

I seem to have these dreams four or five times a year. The strangest concerned a rod about 8in (20cm) or so that went across in front of me about 3ft (90cm) away. It went from left to right at head level and seemed to oscillate up and down very quickly. Several months later, I had a detached retina in my left eye. While it was being operated on in hospital, I couldn’t see out of the eye; but suddenly in my left eye vision I saw what I would describe as a rod oscillating up and down, going from left to right. I think it was a tool that was being used on my eye.

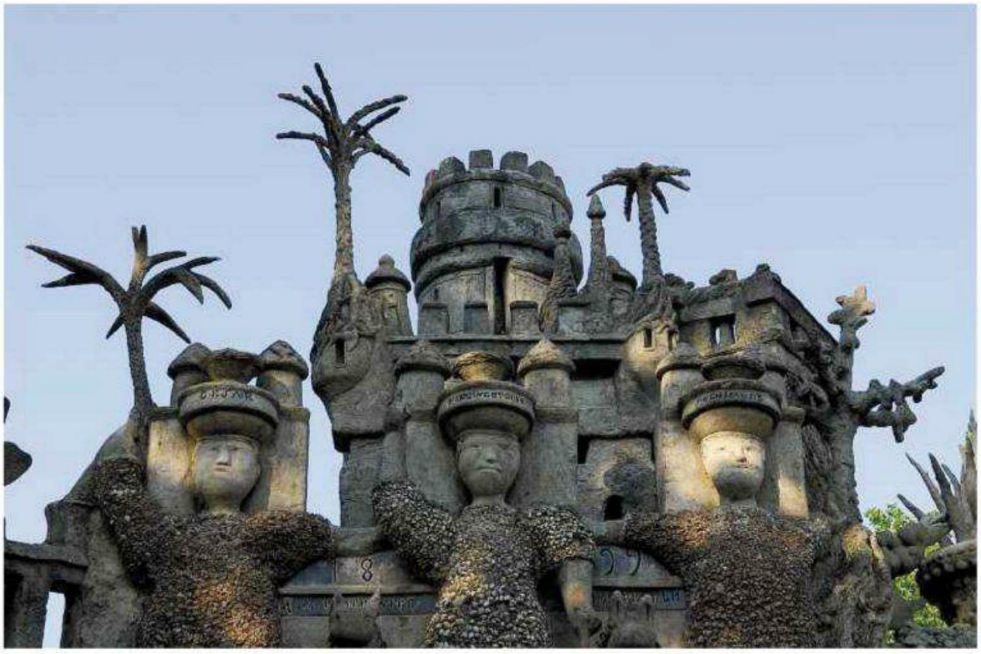
Of course, if we take on board the argument proposed by some astrophysicists that all time exists at once, precognition doesn’t really exist.

Philip Hemmise
By email

FORTEAN TRAVELLER

79. The Palais Idéal

SIMON WILSON visits a unique monument to the universal powers of creativity – the bizarre life's work of a rural French postman.



EMMANUEL GEORGES / COLL. PALAIS IDÉAL

ABOVE: Three etiolated giants pointing heaven- and earthwards.

"1879–1912. Ten thousand days, 93 thousand hours, 33 testing years.

"The east-facing façade is 26 metres [85ft] long, the west-facing façade is the same length, that facing the north is 14 [46ft] and that facing the south 10 [33ft]: the latter two form a quarter of the edifice with an average length of 12 metres [40ft] and a height ranging between 8 and 10 metres [26–33ft]."

Built by hand by one man, the *Palais Idéal* is an indescribable structure. Even its creator, when called upon to sum it up in words, resorted to bald lists of numbers, as the above quotations testify.[1] Perhaps all one can do is to isolate certain striking elements. The three etiolated giants, for instance, pointing heaven- and earthwards. A great Temple of Nature, bearing statues of the Virgin Mary, the four evangelists, angels and a Calvary. Sculpted models of a Hindu temple, the White House, a mediæval castle and a Swiss chalet. A richly decorated interior gallery with labyrinths at each end. Staircases winding up to a terrace, profusely ornamented and turreted. Egyptian mummies. A grotto enclosing a wheelbarrow. And everywhere stonework coaxed into astounding shapes which may be tendrils, plant-life, birds, fountains, cascades of water, camels or obscure heroes.

The *Palais Idéal* is an unprecedented, extraordinary edifice which has turned the French village of Hauterives, about 80km (50 miles) south of Lyons, into something of a Mecca for artists. The surrealist André Breton (see pp48–50) was possibly the first to make the trip, in 1931. In the following decades, many others visited, notably Picasso and Max Ernst. Robert Crumb was a more recent pilgrim, describing the *Palais* as "a great work of art".[2]

Yet despite the building's attraction for great names in the art world, it is still regarded by many critics and historians as, at best, a bizarre folly, and at worst, a symptom of mental disturbance. The dismissive – at times even hostile – reaction is not only due to its otherworldly appearance. It is clearly also a direct consequence of the *Palais* being the work of an obscure rural postman. Joseph-Ferdinand Cheval – generally referred to as the Facteur Cheval ("Cheval the Postman") – dedicated his leisure hours to fashioning the *Palais*, but his humble social standing and lack of artistic education have led his masterpiece to be patronisingly categorised as merely 'primitive' or 'naïve' art. Even when it was finally listed by the French State as a Historic Monument in 1969, its recognition was based on its being "the only example in architecture of naïve art".[3]

Ironically, the view held by sophisticated French academicians differs only in degree from the way Cheval was regarded by his peers in Hauterives. In 1911, for instance, the Facteur wrote that his neighbours had viewed him as a madman, albeit a harmless one, possessed of a "diseased imagination".

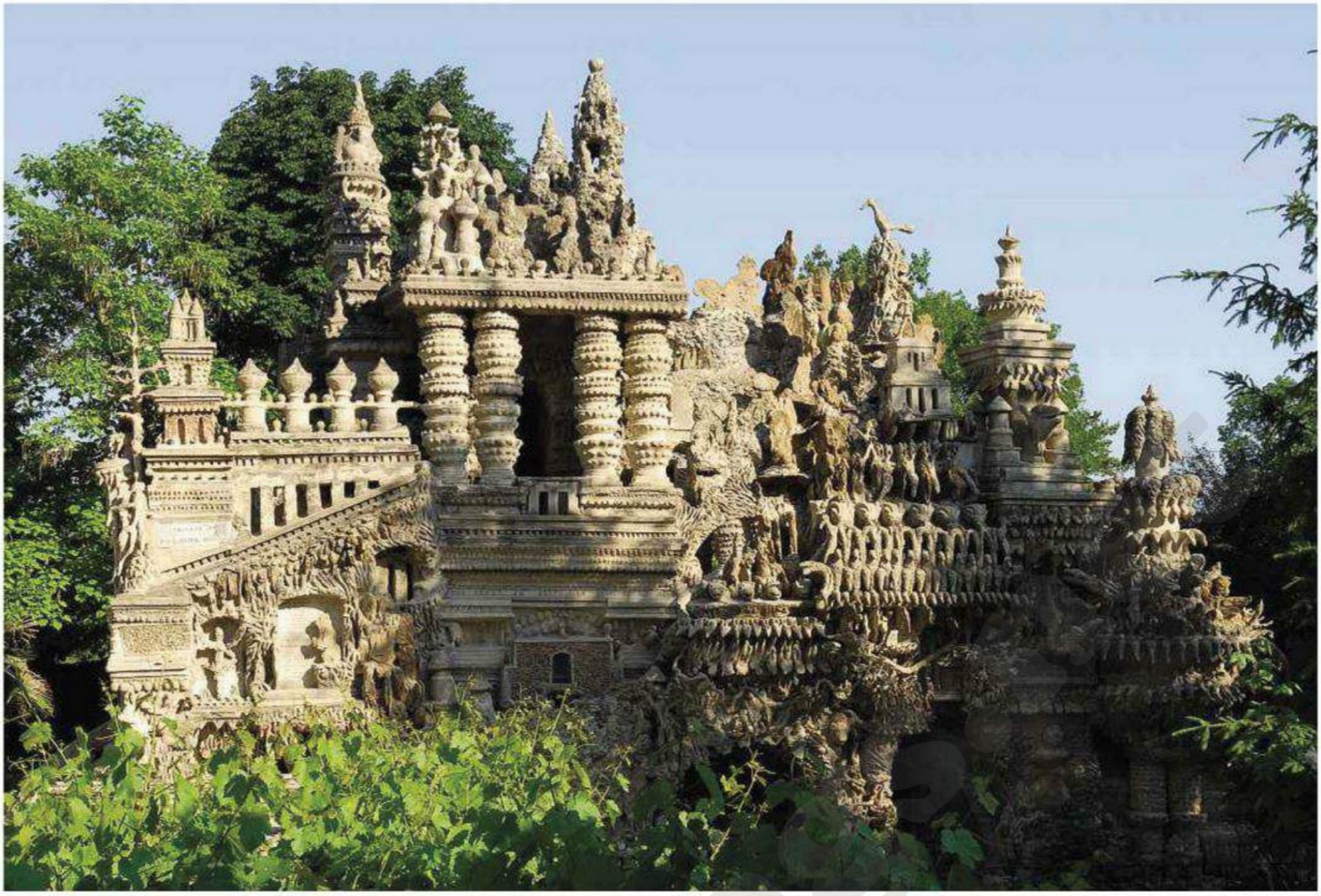
The *Palais Idéal* is, it is true, an exteriorisation of Cheval's inner world, but the mind it reveals was not ignorant, narrow, dim or deranged. It was suffused by the life-giving creative powers of the Cosmos.

We do not need to speculate about the Facteur's mental state or about his motivations. He himself left us written testimony in letters and, from 1905 onwards, a series of school exercise books (or '*Cahiers*') in which he outlined his life and the history of the *Palais*.

Cheval was born on 19 April 1836. His existence was marked, even from an early age, by impermanence, sudden change, and the death of loved ones. His mother died when he was 11, his father when he was 18. He outlived two wives and several of his children, notably his favourite daughter Alice, whose death in 1894 at the age of 14 devastated him. As a young man, he had a series of badly paid jobs in various different towns and fell seriously into debt. At one point in the early 1860s, he seemed to disappear, and it was rumoured that he had run away to Algeria.

In 1867, he finally found steadier employment as a rural postman. His new occupation gave him more financial security and also, by its very nature, served to systematise and give structure to his peripatetic, unsettled life. His postal round at Hauterives was 32km (20 miles) long and took him eight hours to complete. It led him over hilly, at times quite difficult, terrain where roads quickly gave way to rough tracks. He was to walk it almost daily until he retired in 1896, aged 60.

The new regularity of his life brought a new enemy: boredom. To combat the tedium, Cheval turned his exacting but repetitive labour into a kind of spiritual exercise. As he wrote in his



EMMANUEL GEORGES / COLL. PALAIS IDÉAL

Cahier of December 1911: "What was to be done, walking perpetually through the same scenery, unless one dreamed? That's exactly what I did; I dreamed… As a diversion for my mind I built a fairy palace in my dreams…"

He developed what was in effect a powerful meditation technique based on vivid visualisation accompanied by rigorous physical exercise. As his body walked through the countryside, in his mind he was building and exploring a huge castle of the imagination bit by bit, year by year, until his interior vision was more solid, more real than the world around him.

For some 10 years, the Facteur trained his inner eye until, aged 40, to his dismay, he suddenly found that he had lost confidence in his visionary experiences. It must have been a desolate time for him, dragging himself and his satchel of post through the shifting impermanence of the outer world, where the only certainty was the next death. Years later, he was to inscribe a sentence on the wall of his *Palais* which seems to capture his despair: "We pass like a shadow on the Earth: coming from dust, we will return to it." Trudging his rounds like a somnambulist, he must have felt that he existed only as a shade, a chance agglomeration of dust.

He was shaken awake from his half-life in April 1879, when, in the course of his rounds, he almost came a cropper. Stumbling forward, he turned – as one does – to see what had tripped him and suddenly the jarring shock to his system became a revelation, a revelation of the creative power surging through his own being and through the whole of nature. He saw a lump of rock, resembling (in his own words) "a sculpture as bizarre as it is impossible for man to imitate, it represents every species of animal, every kind of caricature. I said to myself: since nature wants to sculpt, then I will turn my hand to masonry and architecture."

"Styles from all countries and all epochs are mixed"

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ABOVE: Some of the ornate statuary of the *Palais*.

BELOW: Cheval working on his vision.

At once, in a flash, he was able to see the extravagant creative impulse in nature and to realise that he too possessed it. His illumination erased for him any gap between his inner vision and the impermanence of outer forms. He understood that creativity was the ultimate reality and that it was to be found everywhere. He knew now that, working with nature, he could actually build the dream castles which he had once constructed in his head.

Cheval's experience transformed his life. Inspired, he immediately began to gather stones for his palace, and continued to do so for the next 33 years, scouring the landscape while on his rounds for the right kind of rocks and perfect pebbles, and often returning at night with his trusty wheelbarrow to pick them up. Thus, building on land he was able to purchase with his second wife's dowry, he slowly and painstakingly created the *Palais*.

When it was finally finished in 1912, the Facteur's palace was to bear witness to his vision of all-encompassing creativity. It crosses all boundaries. As Cheval wrote, "styles from all countries and from all epochs are merged and mixed" in the *Palais*. Animal, vegetable, mineral – all categories flow into each other in its extraordinary shapes. The natural and the man-made, Heaven and Earth, past, present and future, they are all reconciled there. Everything seems related to everything else, without ever giving way to mere confusion or disorientation.

Appropriately, he began work on his masterpiece by constructing what he called “the Source of Life”. Stone tendrils of water bursting out like a crown from a series of basins, watery stones cascading down, guarded by a dog and a lion and presided over by other totemic beasts, the sculpture manifestly expresses Cheval’s delight in his overflowing creativity. Creativity and life, he tells us, are one. In finding creativity, he has found true life; in finding true life, he has found creativity. Stumbling over the stone, he had tapped in fact into what Coleridge, in his poem *The Eolian Harp*, called:

“the one Life within us and abroad,
Which meets all motion and becomes its soul…”

It may, then, seem paradoxical that when the Facteur turned his hand to preparing the next major section of his palace, it was in the form of an “Egyptian” tomb over which he went on to erect a huge, four-pillared monument (the “Egyptian Monument”, later renamed the Temple of Nature). This was intended to serve as the Cheval family crypt. When his beloved daughter Alice died, he was determined to inter her there, and it was only the refusal of the authorities to grant the necessary permission which prevented him from doing so.

It is true that he often seemed just as concerned with death in his works as with life. A mere two years after competing the *Palais*, for instance, Cheval, now aged 77, embarked on his second masterpiece and final resting-place, the “Tomb of Silence and Repose Without End”, in a corner of the cemetery at Hauterives. His Tomb took him another eight years to complete; he died in 1924, aged 88.

But one should not be misled into regarding the *Palais* as primarily funerary in function. Properly understood, neither it nor the Tomb is a monument to a life which has passed. The death they mark is the death of the Facteur’s somnolent existence before his fateful stumble. His tripping over the stone was in fact a kind of initiation. Groups such as the Freemasons, which claim to offer their members deeper access to the mysteries of life and the Cosmos, generally stage an initiation ritual in which the candidate dies, only to rise again a new man or woman. It is a kind of rebirth, and what is born this second time is apparently a freer, more complete, above all more truly *alive* self, conscious of the powers and spiritual order of the Cosmos. Whatever we make of these claims, they closely correspond to Cheval’s experience. Tripping over the stone, he underwent a rebirth of sorts as his old humdrum daily existence dropped away and a new man arose.

Seen in this light, the *Palais* represents the truer self which rose from his virtual fall. The visitor sees confirmation of this in the great letters topping the pillars which give structure to the west-facing façade. Placed at intervals of several feet, their significance is not immediately clear. One has to step back and survey most of this side of the Palace before it becomes apparent that they spell out a name: CHEVAL. Gazing at the *Palais*, we are not looking at a tomb but at a transfigured Joseph-Ferdinand Cheval, gloriously alive here and now and forever. It bears witness to the unlimited energy and creativity of a man who is filled with Coleridge’s “one Life”.

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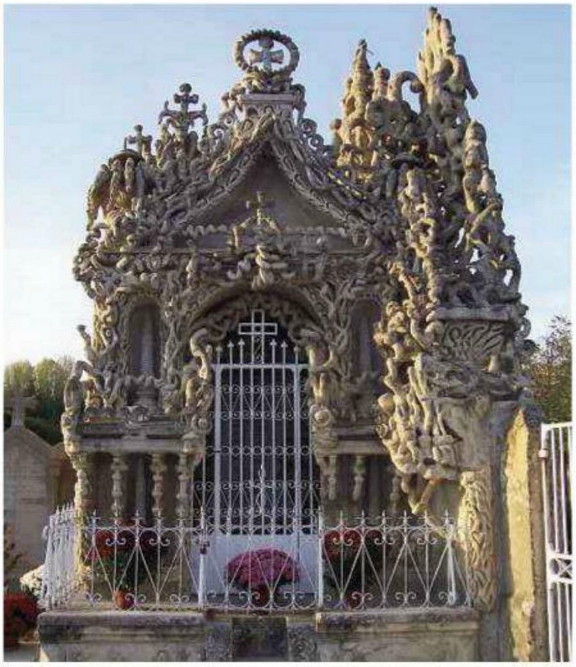

WIKILOG / CREATIVE COMMONS

TOP: Cheval gathers his materials.

ABOVE: Cheval’s tomb at the *Palais*.

One of the toughest messages at the heart of the *Palais*, in fact, is that we would each be capable of creating something like it if only we would allow Life, and not mere entertainment or distraction, to rule our existence. If only, that is, we followed the Facteur’s example. As he wrote in his *Cahier* of December 1911:

“… I would have been able to use my leisure time for hunting, fishing, playing billiards or cards, there is no shortage of distractions; [but] I preferred the realisation of my Dream over all other possibilities.”

It goes without saying, however, that the Facteur did not intend the Palace to convey this message by impressing us with his dour determination. He believed, rather, that visitors’ imaginations would undergo a transformation in the presence of his work. Viewing the structure, he wrote: “[T]he imagination is left gripped and struck and one wonders if one hasn’t been suddenly transported, as if by magic, into another hemisphere, where everything is superhuman, phenomenal and dazzling…”

He always intended his work to be viewed by others, and conceived of a visit as a repetition of his own experience stumbling over the stone. He wanted visitors to feel something of what he had felt, to be transported to a world of enchantment, to undergo, that is, a sort of initiation. Thus, filled with some of the Life he had experienced, they too could realise their creative potential.

Cheval in fact wanted as many people as possible to see his *Palais*, and to ensure that, once they were there, visitors should experience his work in the right and proper fashion. From 1907 onwards, he employed a maid to meet visitors and instruct them on the correct sequence for viewing the building (one was supposed to begin with the north-facing façade and then proceed around it clockwise). For those who were unable to come to the *Palais*, he made sure that the *Palais* could come to them. From 1905 onwards, he had a series of postcards produced, bearing poems alongside pictures of his Palace. As a postman, he understood the potential of the mail for disseminating images around the world. Perhaps some lucky recipients would be granted their own transformational experiences and find their imaginations fired by cosmic creativity. The more people came into contact with the *Palais*, the more the world and its inhabitants would gradually be transfigured into one Ideal Palace, universal and infinitely diverse. Such would be Cheval’s utopia.

This article is offered as a modest, misshapen pebble for use in building that global palace – or as a postcard stamped and addressed by Cheval the Postman. FT

SIMON WILSON is a writer, researcher and English teacher. He is a frequent *FT* contributor and is currently based in Munich, where he lives with Lise.

NOTES

1 All quotations are from Jean-Pierre Jouve, Claude Prévost, Clovis Prévost: *Le Palais Idéal du Facteur Cheval: Quand le Songe Devient la Réalité*, A.R.I.E. Éditions, Hédouville, 1994, p285.

2 *Pers. comm.*

3 Although Simon Rodia built his Watts Towers in Los Angeles between 1921 and 1954.

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Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox.

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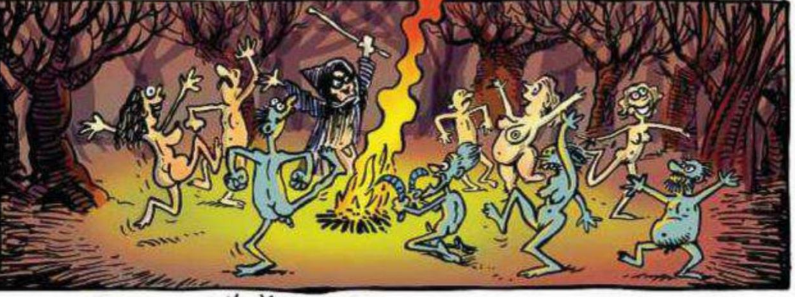
PHENOMENOMIX

***Great Occultists:* GERALD GARDNER & WICCA - part 2**

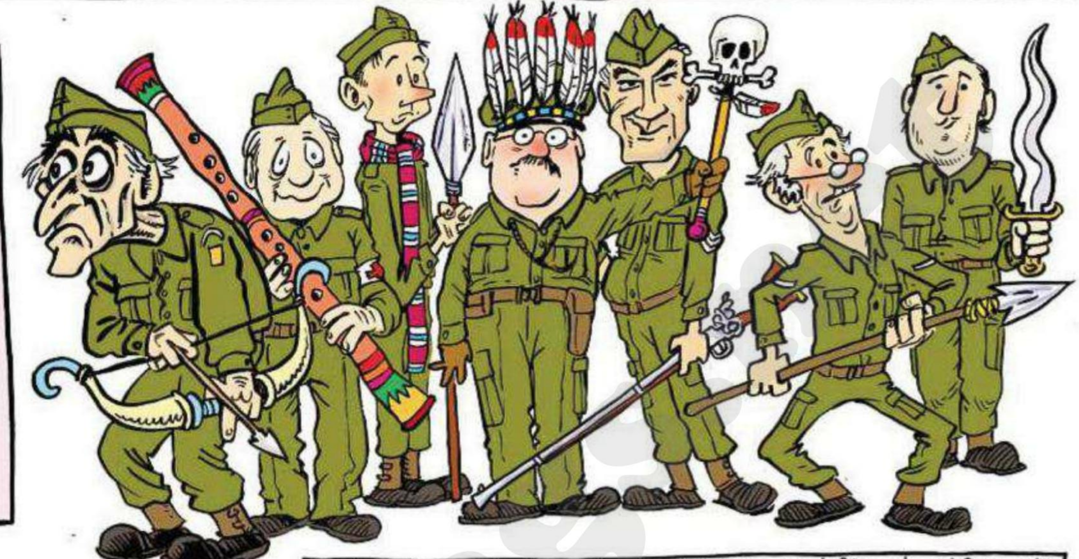
HUNT EMERSON and KEVIN JACKSON

AFTER MANY YEARS OF TRAVEL, GERALD GARDNER FINALLY SETTLED IN ENGLAND. HE MOVED TO THE **NEW FOREST**, WHERE, IN 1939, HE WAS INITIATED INTO THE LOCAL **COVEN** IN A NAKED CEREMONY...



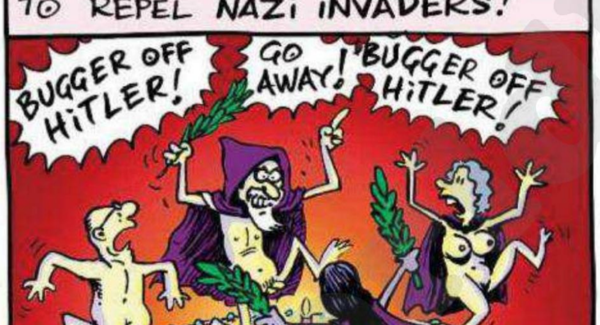
THEN WAR BROKE OUT!

GARDNER WAS A PATRIOT... HE JOINED THE LOCAL **A.R.P.** AND EQUIPPED ITS MEMBERS WITH EXOTIC WEAPONS FROM HIS LARGE COLLECTION...

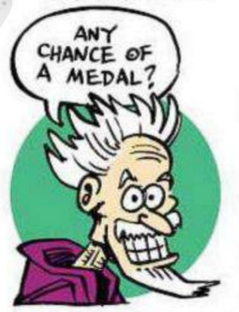


NB: Yes, I know the Home Guard and A.R.P. were different outfits. HE

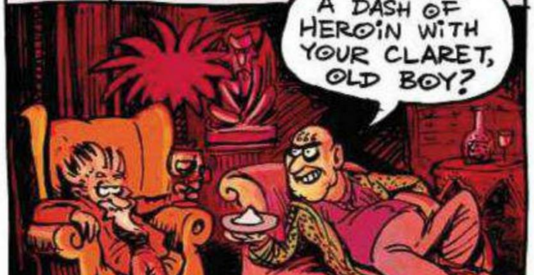
IN 1940 HE CARRIED OUT WHAT HE CALLED "OPERATION CONE OF POWER" - A MAGICKAL WORKING DESIGNED TO REPEL **NAZI INVADERS!**


BUGGER OFF HITLER!
GO AWAY!
BUGGER OFF HITLER!

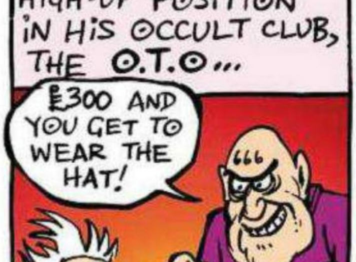
GARDNER WAS CONVINCED THAT THIS WAS A MAJOR CONTRIBUTION TO THE WAR EFFORT...


ANY CHANCE OF A MEDAL?

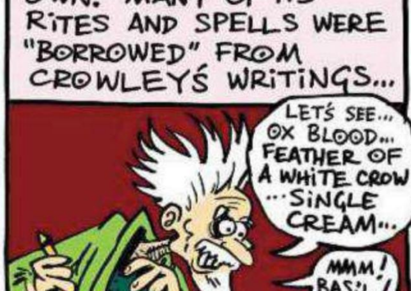
WHEN THE WAR WAS DULY WON, GARDNER MET - WHO ELSE? - **ALEISTER CROWLEY!** THE TWO OCCULTISTS HIT IT OFF FROM THE START...


CARE FOR A DASH OF HEROIN WITH YOUR CLARET, OLD BOY?

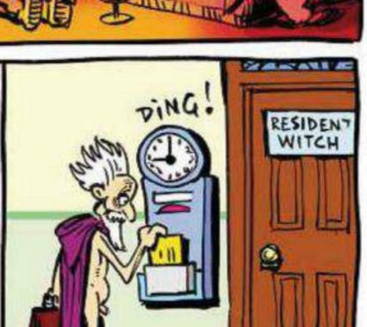
AND SHORTLY BEFORE HE DIED, CROWLEY SOLD GARDNER A HIGH-UP POSITION IN HIS OCCULT CLUB, THE **O.T.O**...


£300 AND YOU GET TO WEAR THE HAT!
666

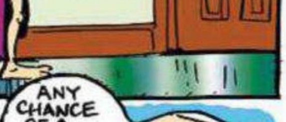
GARDNER WENT ON TO FORM A COVEN OF HIS OWN! MANY OF ITS RITES AND SPELLS WERE "BORROWED" FROM CROWLEY'S WRITINGS...


LET'S SEE... OX BLOOD... FEATHER OF A WHITE CROW ...SINGLE CREAM...
MMM! BASIL!

IN THE 1950s, GARDNER MOVED TO THE ISLE-OF-MAN, WHERE HE WAS EMPLOYED AS **WITCH IN RESIDENCE** AT A MUSEUM OF MAGIC AND WITCHCRAFT.


DING!
RESIDENT WITCH

HE DIED IN 1964 ON A BOAT OFF THE COAST OF TUNISIA... HIS BODY IS BURIED IN TUNIS -- WHO KNOWS WHERE THE REST OF HIM IS?...


ANY CHANCE OF A POSTHUMOUS MEDAL?
FATHER OF MODERN WICCA BELOVED OF THE GREAT GODDESS

COMING NEXT MONTH

TITANIC PREMONITIONS

WAS THE WORLD'S WORST MARITIME DISASTER FORESEEN?

DION FORTUNE

THE MAGIC AND MYSTICISM OF BRITAIN'S HIGH PRIESTESS

+

CURIOUS CRICKET, GHOSTLY GROPER, SAUCER SMASHES AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 287

ON SALE 29 MARCH

HUGO PIETTE

TALES FROM THE VAULT

EACH MONTH WE SEND *FORTEAN TIMES* FOUNDER BOB RICKARD DOWN INTO THE DARKEST, COBWEB-RIDDEN DEPTHS OF THE VAULTS OF FORTEAN TOWERS IN SEARCH OF STORIES FROM *FT*'S PAST.

APRIL 1982

On the penultimate day of this month, the motor-vessel *Siam* was crossing the China Sea when it encountered a classic fortean phenomenon: a luminous pattern in the ocean. It began with phosphorescent bands rushing towards the ship at about 40mph (64km/h). Witnesses said they appeared to be *above* the water surface. They then changed into three huge, counter-clockwise rotating wheels with luminous spokes that reached the horizon. After a pause, there appeared four sets of onrushing bands, and then four light-wheels. Then, simultaneously with the wheels, patches of brilliant blue-white light began flashing all around the ship. Radar, visible light and engine noise did not seem to affect the phenomenon, but when an Aldis lamp was flashed at the patches, "the whole array disappeared", reappearing after some minutes. Each patch seemed to be composed of worm-like segments that were all aligned and, unlike the wheels and bands, appeared to be just *below* the surface. The weather and sea were calm although all around the ship "electrical activity could be seen". This awe-inspiring display lasted 2½ hours. **FT42:32**

APRIL 1992

The discovery, this month, of the mutilated body of a boy in a sawmill in Guaratuba, southern Brazil, set off a two-month police investigation into the country's two main spirit cults, Umbanda and Candomble. Eventually, Oswaldo Marcineiro, a Candomble elder, confessed that he and two accomplices had killed the boy; but it was a 'private enterprise', he said, and nothing to do with the cult's worship in which African animism is conflated with paganised Roman Catholicism. Marcineiro's papers implicated the town's mayor, who owned the mill, and his wife and daughter, who had commissioned the sacrifice for his success in the coming elections. In addition, the two women were charged with disembowelling the boy and taking some of his organs. Horror was compounded when Marcineiro revealed that his group had already killed another boy as part of a plan to sacrifice seven blond children, aged seven, with seven letters in their name, before those elections. Meanwhile, across the Andes, in Ecuador, "the worst serial killer in modern history" was released from jail in Quito. Pedro Lopez served only 11 years for raping and strangling more than 350 girls. At the same time, two other serial killers were plying their trade in Ecuador; one had killed 11 taxi-drivers, and the other nine transvestites. **FT66:46–47**

APRIL 2002

A good candidate for survival in a post-Apocalyptic post-human world is the Argentine ant, *Linepithema humile*. Accidentally introduced into Europe in the 1920s, the invader has already formed an empire that has supplanted more than 20 types of indigenous species of European ant. An international team of scientists reported that the Argentine ants had formed a super-colony stretching more than 6,000km (3,730 miles) around the Iberian Peninsula from northern Portugal around southern Spain to Marseilles and beyond. They said that billions of ants in millions of nests had formed the world's largest known co-operative unit of individual organisms. **FT160:8**

This month, Michael McDermott, who worked in a software company in Boston, USA, was sentenced to life by a Massachusetts court for shooting and killing seven co-workers in a case that was headlined "Angry Time-Traveller shoots Hitler". McDermott, 43, claimed that, two weeks before the massacre, the Archangel Michael promised him a soul if he would kill Hitler and his High Command. On Christmas Day, 2001, he bought guns; then, on Boxing Day, a call from his mother was taken as the signal to swallow painkillers and go on the rampage. According to McDermott, when he arrived at the company's building, "a time portal opened up" sweeping him into Hitler's bunker in 1940. "Hitler was there," he said later. "I shot him. The mission was a success. I knew I had a soul." Afterwards, he calmly returned to the lobby where he gave himself up to arresting officers with the words "I don't speak German". McDermott later claimed that he died of an alcohol and drug overdose at the police station. "Where are you now?" asked his lawyer. "Purgatory," he replied. The court heard evidence (found on his computer) that he had researched how to fake a mental illness; he said it was to learn how to appear sane and stay out of mental hospital. McDermott was taking Prozac and similar medications and had, while serving in the Navy, once tried to escape from a submarine while it was submerged. Despite this history, the jury rejected his plea of 'not guilty by insanity' and upheld the prosecution case that he was angry with the company over a pay dispute. **FT161:16**

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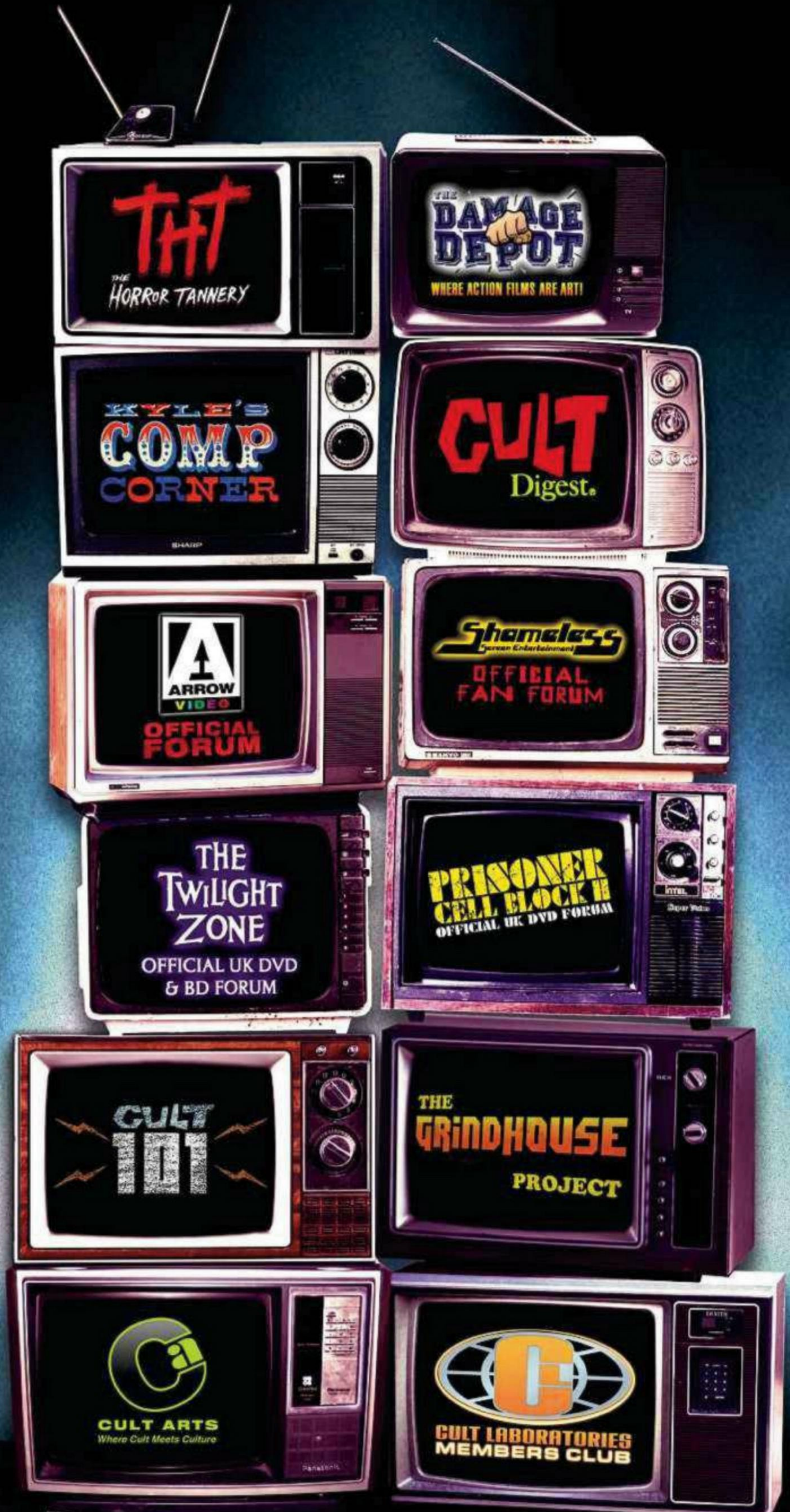
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